

USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model

A Tool for Developing the Service's Leaders

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USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model

Introduction

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a long and proud tradition of achieving our mission through scientific excellence and leadership. The Service has maintained its preeminent role in these areas by “growing leadership” through employee development. As a continuation of this heritage, the Service’s Leadership Competency Development Model has been developed to assist with the continuous learning efforts of our employees, and to guide employees at all levels and in all functions toward excellence in addressing the Service’s mission.

The Service’s Leadership Competency Development Model is provided in response to employee interest in knowing what skills or experiences are needed in order to succeed in leadership positions, and also in response to the Service Directorate’s commitment to ensure that our agency continues to have a cadre of employees who are prepared for advancement to senior conservation leadership positions. The Model was developed based on input from over 600 leaders and includes Wage Grade leaders to Senior Executive leaders. The Model identifies attributes that an employee should obtain, at whatever his or her level or job in the Service, to enhance readiness for positions of greater responsibility. This Model also enhances and compliments the scientific and natural resources management knowledge and skills that remain critical to employee performance and success in conservation leadership.

Value of the USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model

The USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model assists Service employees in the identification of the mission critical competencies or priority areas our Service leadership deemed significant at four different organizational levels of leadership. This tool was developed for the purpose of educating leaders at all levels regarding the competencies required for their success at each leadership level. For the leader who has reached their target level, this tool can be used to help identify strengths and areas for improvement for the purpose of continuous learning. For the individual aspiring to the next leadership level, this tool can be used to help create an [Individual Development Plan](#) (IDP). Supervisors can use this Model as a tool in coaching and mentoring their aspiring subordinates.

The USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model was developed to help prepare you to be a more effective leader in the Service. The Model answers the question regarding what competencies our Service leaders feel are most important for success in our agency. While the intent is not to minimize or

downplay the importance of striving for excellence in all 28 leadership competencies, it is helpful for Service employees to know what Service leadership believes to be the top mission critical competencies for our agency leaders.

How to Use This Tool

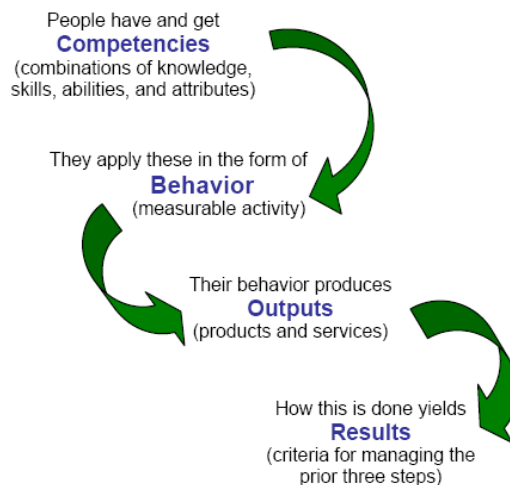
This tool is designed so the reader can reference information by various methods. The following information is provided to accurately describe what each leadership competency looks like:

- A definition of a competency
- A description of the importance of the competency to a Service leader
- A description of how the competency is demonstrated in the Service
- The elements that make up the competency for a particular organizational level
- The behaviors that make up the element
- A listing of potential developmental activities that can be used to increase or develop competence

What is a Competency?

A competency is the integration of one's knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes in order to perform effectively on the job. Competencies are observable and measurable behaviors, which are critical to successful individual and corporate performance.

Competencies incorporate knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes, applied through behaviors, which help to ensure organizational/mission critical results and outcomes.



Modified from U.S. Department of Labor
"Competency Continuum"

The Department of the Interior, [Department Manual 370 DM 312.3](#) identifies mission critical competencies as being those clusters of knowledge, abilities, skills and attributes that are critical to producing the key outcomes for mission accomplishment. The USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model identifies and explains the seven mission critical competencies for each organizational leadership levels in the Service.

OPM Leadership Competencies

The Office of Personnel Management identified 28 specific leadership competencies that are critical to leadership success. These competencies are based on extensive research of Government and private sector executives with input from agency senior executives and human resource managers. Twenty-two of the competencies are specific competencies that are contained within the executive core qualifications. The remaining six leadership competencies are the foundational competencies that, as a minimum, all leaders must be proficient in to be successful.

Foundational Leadership Competencies

Foundational leadership competencies are the tools people need in order to lead others, regardless of the organizational level they function in. These foundational leadership competencies are skills, areas of knowledge, and attributes, and are basic or fundamental to all leaders in government. These leadership competencies form the foundation for employees to continually develop and build upon through their careers in the Service as they assume positions with increased responsibility and authority.

Possessing skill and expertise in the foundational competencies is essential to employees at all organizational levels. Experience and training that strengthen and demonstrate the basic foundational competencies will enhance a candidates overall qualifications for leadership positions. All other leadership competencies build or springboard from the foundational knowledge provided by these six competencies.

No one foundational competency is considered more important than the other. Successful leaders at all organizational levels are proficient in all six of the foundational leadership competencies. Because of this, the foundational competencies are sometimes referred to by human resource professionals as the “*sacred six*”.

The six foundational leadership competencies are as follows:

Foundational Leadership Competencies	
Interpersonal Skills	Treats others with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect. Considers and responds appropriately to the needs and feelings of different people in different situations.
Oral Communication	Makes clear and convincing oral presentations. Listens effectively; clarifies information as needed.
Integrity/Honesty	Behaves in an honest, fair, and ethical manner. Shows consistency in words and actions. Models high standards of ethics.
Written Communication	Writes in a clear, concise, organized, and convincing manner for the intended audience.
Continual Learning	Assesses and recognizes own strengths and weaknesses; pursues self-development.
Public Service Motivation	Shows a commitment to serve the public. Ensures that actions meet public needs; aligns organizational objectives and practices with public interests.

OPM Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's)

OPM identified and adopted the Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ)'s and their underlying leadership competencies in 1997. Since the Service adopted the ECQ's and their underlying leadership competencies, emerging and current leaders have expressed some frustration around the fact that there are numerous competencies and they may not be of the same priority to all leaders in all functional areas. The priority of the competencies is situational, and often depends upon position, program, and organizational leadership level of the individual. The Service recognized this concern, which led to the development and adoption of the USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model.

The five executive core qualifications identified in this Model are based on extensive research done by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) of the attributes of successful executives in both the private and public sectors. They were derived by lengthy collaboration, reflecting the best thinking of many senior executives and associations, as well as agency human resources professionals.

The five OPM Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's) are:

Leading Change	The ability to bring about strategic change, both within and outside the organization, to meet organizational goals. Inherent to this qualification is the ability to establish an organizational vision and to implement it in a continuously changing environment.
Leading People	The ability to lead people toward meeting the organization's vision, mission, and goals. Inherent to this qualification is the ability to provide an inclusive workplace that fosters the development of others, facilitates cooperation and teamwork, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts.
Results Driven	The ability to meet organizational goals and customer expectations. Inherent to this qualification is the ability to make decisions that produce high-quality results by applying technical knowledge, analyzing problems, and calculating risks.
Business Acumen	The ability to manage human, financial, and information resources strategically.
Building Coalitions	The ability to build coalitions internally and with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit and private sector organizations, foreign governments, or international organizations to achieve common goals.

The ECQ's are used by many departments and agencies in selection, performance management, and leadership development for management and executive positions. Successful leaders address all five qualifications in their development and in carrying out their leadership responsibilities. Experience and training that strengthen the leadership competencies will enhance a leader's performance. Employees interested in the mid-level, senior and executive leader levels should ensure they develop bench strength in leadership competencies that span across all five ECQ's. This is particularly important for leadership positions that have influence outside the Service.

Leadership Competencies by ECQ

The other 22 competencies are needed to develop a leadership culture in the Service that drives for results, serves customers, and builds successful teams and coalitions within and outside the organization. Within each of the core qualifications are specific competencies that define areas where employees can assess their knowledge and abilities, and target their training, job assignments, education and career path to further develop these leadership attributes and succeed in the organization. The level and scope at which these competencies are performed increase as grade and responsibilities increase.

The leadership competencies with their associated ECQ are as follows:

Core Qualification 1: Leading Change

Competencies Associated with Leading Change	
Creativity and Innovation	Develops new insights into situations; questions conventional approaches; encourages new ideas and innovations; designs and implements new or cutting edge programs/processes.
External Awareness	Understands and keeps up-to-date on local, national, and international policies and trends that affect the organization and shape stakeholders' views; is aware of the organization's impact on the external environment.
Flexibility	Is open to change and new information; rapidly adapts to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
Resilience	Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

Competencies Associated with Leading Change	
Strategic Thinking	Formulates objectives and priorities, and implements plans consistent with the long-term interests of the organization in a global environment. Capitalizes on opportunities and manages risks.
Vision	Takes a long-term view and builds a shared vision with others; acts as a catalyst for organizational change. Influences others to translate vision into action.

Core Qualification 2: Leading People

Competencies Associated with Leading People	
Conflict Management	Encourages creative tension and differences of opinions. Anticipates and takes steps to prevent counter-productive confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a constructive manner.
Leveraging Diversity	Fosters an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.
Developing Others	Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.
Team Building	Inspires and fosters team commitment, spirit, pride, and trust. Facilitates cooperation and motivates team members to accomplish group goals.

Core Qualification 3: Results Driven

Competencies Associated with Results Driven	
Accountability	Holds self and others accountable for measurable high-quality, timely, and cost-effective results. Determines objectives, sets priorities, and delegates work. Accepts responsibility for mistakes. Complies with established control systems and rules.

Competencies Associated with Results Driven	
Customer Service	Anticipates and meets the needs of both internal and external customers. Delivers high-quality products and services; is committed to continuous improvement.
Decisiveness	Makes well-informed, effective, and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; perceives the impact and implications of decisions.
Entrepreneurship	Positions the organization for future success by identifying new opportunities; builds the organization by developing or improving products or services. Takes calculated risks to accomplish organizational objectives.
Problem Solving	Identifies and analyzes problems; weighs relevance and accuracy of information; generates and evaluates alternative solutions; makes recommendations.
Technical Credibility	Understands and appropriately applies principles, procedures, requirements, regulations, and policies related to specialized expertise.

Core Qualification 4: Business Acumen

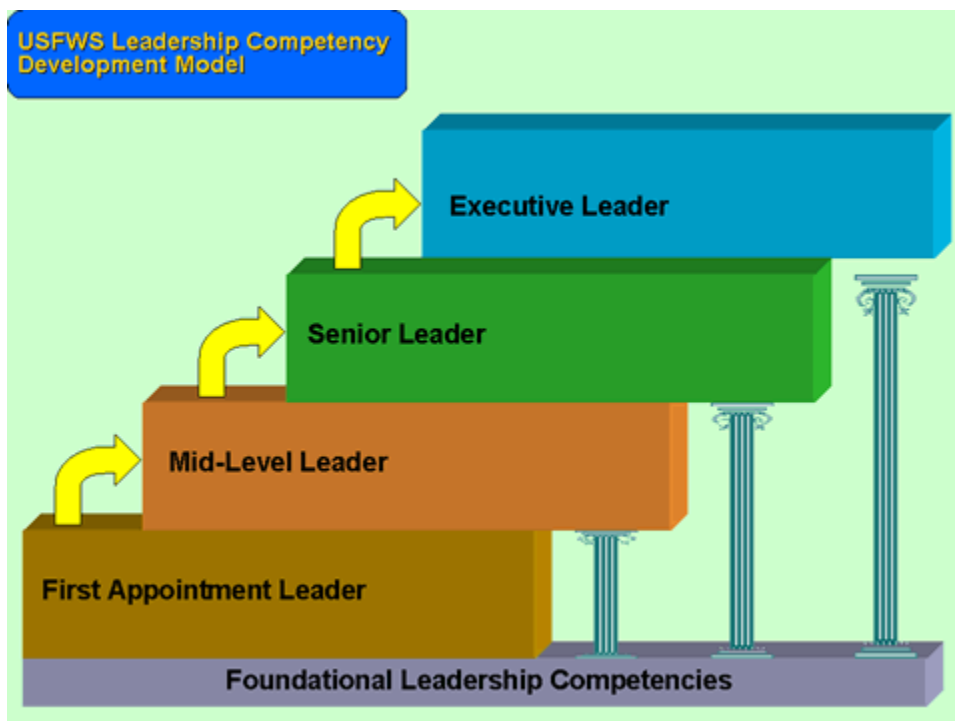
Competencies Associated with Business Acumen	
Financial Management	Understands the organization's financial processes. Prepares, justifies, and administers the program budget. Oversees procurement and contracting to achieve desired results. Monitors expenditures and uses cost-benefit thinking to set priorities.
Human Capital Management	Builds and manages workforce based on organizational goals, budget considerations, and staffing needs. Ensures that employees are appropriately recruited, selected, appraised, and rewarded; takes action to address performance problems. Manages a multi-sector workforce and a variety of work situations.
Technology Management	Keeps up-to-date on technological developments. Makes effective use of technology to achieve results. Ensures access to and security of technology systems.

Core Qualification 5: Building Coalitions

Competencies Associated with Building Coalitions	
Partnering	Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals.
Political Savvy	Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization. Perceives organizational and political reality and acts accordingly.
Influencing/Negotiating	Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals.

Four Organizational Leadership Levels in the Service

The USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model is based on four organizational levels of leadership within the Service. These leadership levels or position complexity levels within the organization define the Service leadership hierarchy and how our workforce is organized from a leadership standpoint. The organizational leadership levels used in the Model are: 1) first appointment leader, 2) mid-level leader, 3) senior leader and 4) executive leader.



In general, the organizational leadership levels of the Service mirror the General Schedule pay scales. These organizational leadership levels are related to work complexity, level of supervision needed for the position, pay scale levels, experience and skills sets needed to advance to the next leadership level. In the Service, first appointment leaders in the General Schedule pay scale are typically GS-5 through GS-10, mid-level leaders are typically GS-11 and GS-12, senior leaders are typically GS-13 and GS-14, while executive leaders are GS-15 and Senior Executive Service (SES).

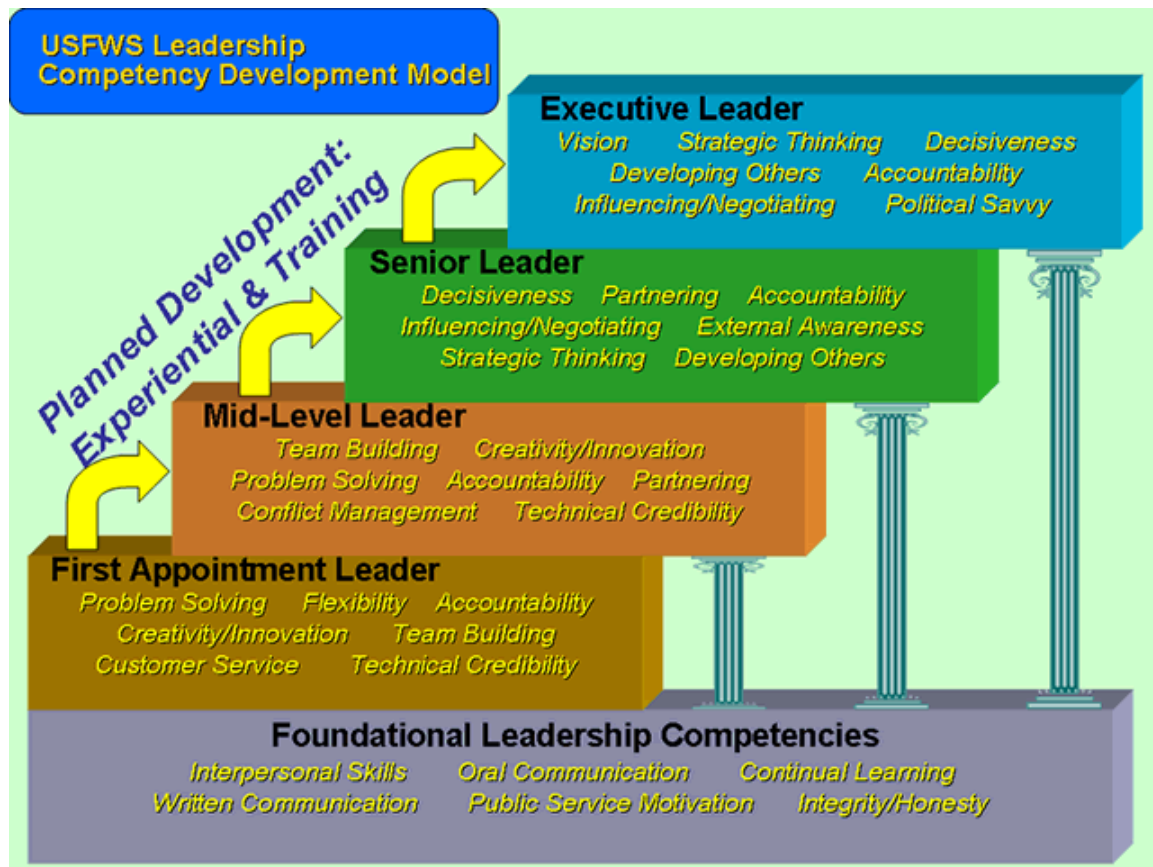
This Model can also be used for Service employees in the Wage Grade pay plan based on their level of supervision, organizational level and position complexity. Because the wage grade pay plan is in line with pay for private industry positions in a specific wage area, the pay level of an individual is not a good indication of what their organizational leadership level might be. For purposes of this Model, Wage grade employees should make subjective judgments regarding what organizational leadership level most appropriately describes them.

Process Used to Develop the Model

In the fall of 2006, a survey was created and administered to Service focus groups determine which OPM leadership competencies the Service determined to be most important for conservation professionals. The survey included all 28 of the OPM leadership competencies for each of the four different organizational leadership levels as defined above. Respondents were asked to identify the seven most important competencies for leadership success at their individual leadership level.

This data was compiled by the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) and presented to the Service Directorate at a meeting in January 2007. At that meeting, the Directorate approved the final list of mission critical leadership competencies for the Service. Since that time, NCTC has been working with a number of Service leaders all over the country to clarify the meaning and significance of each of these competencies at each organizational leadership level, and to create guidance regarding how to obtain proficiency and mastery of the competencies. The outcome of this work is reflected in the USFWS Leadership Competency Development Model.

The Model at a Glance



The foundational leadership competencies form the foundation upon which all leadership success is built. Knowledge, skill and ability in each of these six competencies are the bedrock to success as a leader.

Each of the four organizational leadership levels builds upon the foundation. Even though a progression of logical steps is shown above, the progression of leadership development is not always linear. Mission critical competencies displayed for each organizational leadership level in this Model are situational, and are not cast in stone. As times change, our mission will require that the Service organization make changes too. The competencies leaders need now may not be the same competencies that leaders will need in the future. The Leadership Competency Development Model may need to be updated as organizational changes evolve in the future.

While the intent is not to minimize or downplay the importance of striving for excellence in all 28 leadership competencies, it is often difficult to focus on more than a few competencies at the same time. The Model identifies the top seven competencies Service leaders believed to be most important for success in the Service for each organizational leadership level. Service employees need to

know what these mission critical competencies are, and need to build strength in these areas.

Listed below are seven mission critical competencies identified for Service leaders by Service leaders at each of the organizational levels. Additional information for each of the competencies is provided in this document.

USFWS Mission Critical First Appointment Leader Competencies



ACCOUNTABILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Assures that effective controls are both developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds their self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within their area of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Importance

Accountability application ranges from individual responsibility for setting and meeting high standards for personal performance to the very definition of government workers as stewards of the commonwealth. It is the vehicle through which value is created for the public dollar, and public services are improved. The accountable individual remains in touch with the changing needs of those who are served, and earns their ongoing trust. Accountability is a mark of a mature worker and is dependent on each individual being held responsible for achieving agreed upon outcomes. It is essential to a well-functioning organization that each individual proactively take the responsibility to follow work through to completion, to provide both quality products/services and quality customer service, while meeting commitments in a timely manner and within budget. Government workers must also hold themselves accountable for protecting the privacy of employees, customers, and members of the public. The leader is also accountable for the results of their team.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

First Appointment leaders must prioritize team/project/unit tasks and clearly communicate guidance about the task to include its importance and its elements. They establish deadlines while maintaining both short- and long-term focus on the completion of tasks. They use project management skills to set clear and consistent performance expectations for team managers, project managers, and unit groups. They review performance against standards and established benchmarks, provide feedback and coach subordinate leaders, and address performance problems in a specified timeframe. They build ongoing review into programs/projects to track progress towards stated goals, identify performance gaps enabling course corrections, and evaluate and measure the success of the programs/projects.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Makes efficient and effective use of resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges strong performance and addresses poor performance among team and group members. • Maintains good overview and control of contract performance. • Maintains good overview and control of project/group budgets and costs.
<p>Takes responsibility for personal and team/group performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipates and takes action over impending problems. • Proactively solves problems without attributing blame. • Holds team and project members accountable for achieving results within assigned deadlines. • Communicates and counsels team/group members regarding poor performance • Recognizes and acknowledges good performance • Guides the development of the team/group.
<p>Meets or exceeds standards of excellence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a variety of techniques to help the team/group continually improve. • Works to build on experience and insights of others. • Prioritizes team/project tasks with respect to importance and time available while maintaining focus on end results • Develops others to strengthen their sense of pride in and commitment to their work and dedication to the mission of the Service.
<p>Ensures compliance with policies and laws while addressing stakeholder needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands organizational and customer expectations and needs. • Understands and values the role and input of internal and external stakeholders. • Develops effective strategies and achievable programs of action that take into account stakeholder needs. • Seeks feedback from stakeholders to ensure our products/services are meeting their needs. • Works within the parameters of policies and laws.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Builds performance measures into programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defines, communicates and measures progress for successful performance. • Applies project management skills. • Applies basic evaluation strategies and practices to measure performance. • Reviews performance against clear standards and expectations. • Provides regular feedback and coaches team/group members about their performance. • Addresses performance problems in a timely manner.
Identifies and acts on lessons learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful performance. • Develops clear plans which include necessary adjustments to processes and strategies to improve organizational performance. • Disseminates knowledge and lessons learned using a variety of communications tools, group affiliations and networks. • Keeps managers informed of valuable lessons learned and project results. • Gathers feedback from various sources to improve products, processes, services and delivery.
Assesses and manages risk when making legal and ethical decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the legal and ethical framework of the civil service. • Seeks the input of legal and ethical advisors and balances various assessments of risk before making decisions of critical importance.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Take the time to learn applicable policies and procedures.
- Work on setting clear goals with yourself and others, and monitor progress.
- Follow through with positive and negative rewards and consequences.
- Consider whether you are successful at multitasking, and if not, focus on one project at a time.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Request permission to shadow an experienced leader you admire.
- Ask to fill in for your supervisor in an “acting” role when the opportunity exists.
- Take a 360-degree assessment tool as a way to receive feedback from others.
- Meet with HR and learn who’s who (roles and responsibilities) and who is responsible for what.
- Request a detail into a mid-level leadership position.
- Volunteer to work on a project team that involves multiple stakeholders.

Training

- Attend formal training on risk management.
- Attend formal training on the Service’s performance management system.
- Apply for the FWS [Stepping Up to Leadership Program](#).
- Consider any/all of the following NCTC courses for your development:
 - [Introduction to Management Skills](#)
 - Congressional Operations Seminar
 - [Applied Supervision](#)
- Attend formal training on ethics.
- Gain proficiency in time management by utilizing a process learned in a time management training course.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; supports a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new and innovative programs and/or processes.

Importance

Creative and innovative thinking leads to new insights, novel approaches, fresh perspectives, new ways of understanding and conceiving of things, and leads one to see the world in imaginative and different ways. Creativity and innovation represent a core competency in successful organizations that are able to anticipate and meet strategic challenges including change, advancing technology, an increasingly diverse work force, and constant budget constraints. This is about exploring all options in a systematic way, one that also moves thinking past conventional mental and organizational boundaries. It is using one's full range of skills, knowledge, and experience to search for and address the complex causes, not just symptoms, of problems and to imagine and pose improvements to the organization. At the higher levels it means creating a culture and the organizational means that encourage, support and reward innovative thinking and continual improvement.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

First Appointment leaders model the concepts of innovation and creativity. They encourage critical thinking, innovative problem solving, brainstorming and other techniques that support alternative approaches. They build teams that are diverse in thought, talent and perspective and invest in training that leads to better analysis, problem-solving, and creative solutions. They demonstrate and encourage the use of innovative thinking and problem-solving approaches and acknowledge and reward efforts to encourage a culture of innovation and creativity.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Commits to individual and organizational improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies issues and opportunities to improve team processes, products, services, and service delivery. • Models creative thinking and problem solving. • Recognizes when a situation calls for, or could benefit from, a different approach and explores options. • Sets high expectations for continuing improvements to processes, products and services.
Creates an environment that fosters new ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values new ideas and perspectives. • Establishes team/unit processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. • Challenges others to see new possibilities and pursues different perspectives. • Encourages creative, innovative, and non-conventional contributions. • Understands the role of conflict in creative processes and manages conflict towards positive outcomes. • Adapts to meet changing circumstances, unexpected constraints, or challenges. • Leads team/unit to use brainstorming, systems thinking, and other techniques that offer new perspectives, ideas or solutions. • Provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas and best practices.
Encourages and employs the creativity of internal and external stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides feedback on contributions, processes and services. • Develops staff to take advantage of creative talent, innovative thought, and personal growth and goals. • Rewards individuals and the team/unit for exceeding performance goals. • Employs a broad range of resources in seeking new perspectives, ideas and approaches. • Works closely with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives and interests are understood, and to encourage stakeholders to make contributions.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Uses analytical tools to develop and weigh alternatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses modeling techniques, risk analysis and cost-benefit analysis to identify alternatives. • Weighs potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility. • Develops strategies for enhancing risk analysis and decision-making skills. • Understands the role of evaluation and testing in creative processes.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leadership level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Ask more questions, and be sure you are defining the problem correctly.
- Remove unnecessary constraints, and break out of your comfort zone.
- Generate ideas without passing judgment first.
- Be open to the creative suggestions of others.
- Practice thinking out loud with others.
- Attend meetings where various stakeholders are present such as:
 - Project leaders meetings
 - County and community meetings
 - Project meetings
 - Public meetings
- Work on a community or professional committee.
- Volunteer to take the lead on a challenging project.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Conduct brainstorming meetings and sessions to encourage ideas from others.
- Attend and join your local [Toastmasters](#) club.
- Get involved in a mentoring program; as both a mentor and a mentee.

- Volunteer to facilitate meetings.
- Volunteer to teach a course or lead a brown bag seminar.

Training

- Seek out training on cost-benefit analysis, modeling, decision making, risk analysis, project management, etc.
- Seek out formal training on creativity and innovation and/or read a book on the subject.
- Apply for the FWS [Stepping Up to Leadership Program](#).
- Consider any/all of the following NCTC courses for your development:
 - [Introduction to Management Skills](#)
 - [Applied Supervision](#)

CUSTOMER SERVICE (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Balances the interests of a variety of clients and readily readjusts priorities to respond to pressing and changing client demands. Anticipates and meets the needs of clients, achieves quality end-products, and is committed to continuous improvement of services.

Importance

Customer Service is based on a deep commitment to serving your stakeholders. Good Customer Service recognizes that there are multiple stakeholders who are both internal and external customers, identifies and meets their needs, and strives for continuous improvement. Exemplary Customer Service and stakeholder support is critical to an effective and efficient government and to successful accomplishment of the Service mission.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

First Appointment Leaders must clearly communicate high expectations for good customer service, develop effective ways of consulting with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that service meets current and changing needs, and apply emerging ideas and technologies to serving the customer.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates personal commitment to customer service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and acts on opportunities to enhance customer service delivery system. • Regularly, clearly and enthusiastically communicates personal high expectations for good customer service to the team/unit.
Identifies and anticipates customer needs to provide exemplary service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses input and feedback from customers and team members to anticipate and make improvements in customer service. • Gives clear explanations to stakeholders about why action has, or has not, been proposed or taken regarding their desires. • Builds information-gathering tools and uses them in decision making and planning.
Understands the diverse perspectives, issues and needs of stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates with stakeholders determine their needs. • Provides service that best attempts to address underlying sources and issues behind stakeholder needs. • Considers stakeholder needs and makes service delivery decisions based on those needs balanced with Service requirements and parameters.
Understands the Service mission within its ethical and legal parameters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses legal and ethical standards to resolve issues of fairness, equality, and appropriate scope of services. • Stresses the need for flexibility and responsiveness. • Ensures equal access to services for everyone.
Continuously improves products and services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works creatively towards achieving customer goals. • Looks for alternate approaches and adapts new concepts when appropriate. • Applies emerging ideas, innovations, and new technologies to serving the customer.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Research and address your customers' needs.
- Volunteer for a detail to a customer service position within your organization or to an outside organization that excels in customer service.
- Consider how you would design systems so that they are more effective and efficient?

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Read a book on extraordinary customer service with case studies.
- Shadow someone who is a customer service "superstar".
- Develop a survey or tool to get feedback from your customers.
- Attend a diversity program to learn about other cultures and perspectives.
- Work on improving listening skills and not becoming defensive when customers complain, criticize or make special requests.
- Maintain a positive attitude, and visualize yourself as a dissatisfied customer. What would you correct in your workplace?

Training

- Take training on good customer service, interpersonal skills, and consultation and communication techniques.
- Refer to DOI Learn on-line training for applicable topics.
- Take training in dealing with difficult customers and in conflict resolution skills.

FLEXIBILITY (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Is open to change and new information and adapts behavior and work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles. Rapidly adjusts priorities to new situations which warrant attention and resolution.

Importance

Flexibility is an essential competency for individuals in organizations functioning in a rapidly changing environment. Flexibility is the ability to adapt to and work effectively within dynamic change and flexible leaders see change as an opportunity. It entails understanding and appreciating different and sometimes opposing perspectives on an issue. It requires being open to new information and being able to let go of old assumptions which then allows one to adapt how one operates. It entails keeping alert to changing requirements and being prepared strategically and psychologically to modify one's own, and the organization's, approach as the requirements of the situation changes. Flexibility allows an individual to recognize the anxiety that often accompanies uncertainty, and to react to changing circumstances with creativity by applying new ideas to achieve results.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

A First Appointment leader must understand how change in internal and external circumstances might affect the group and its work. They modify plans or processes to accommodate new circumstances and clearly communicate the changing organizational context and its implications. They must treat each person according to their unique needs instilling a sense of opportunity and possibility in the group's view of change. First Appointment Leaders understand and coach others in stress reduction techniques.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates flexibility and openness to change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes team processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. • Challenges team members to take a different perspective and see new possibilities. • Employs a variety of techniques for exploring different options. • Takes responsible and reasonable risks when trying new approaches.
Adapts behavior based on changing priorities and needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modifies team plans or processes to accommodate new and changing circumstances. • Adjusts priorities, as appropriate, based on the understanding of stakeholder desires. • Explores new tactics and does not always use conventional methodology or traditional approaches. • Identifies and uses new tools, processes and technologies to enhance service. • Enables team/group members to identify potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility.
Seeks new ideas and opinions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a team atmosphere that welcomes and employs new perspectives and ideas. • Seeks input from team members. • Facilitates creative solutions to team conflict. • Seeks out diversity of thought, talent and perspective among team members. • Fosters creative, innovative and non-conventional contributions.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Demonstrates flexibility and openness to change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes team processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. • Challenges team members to take a different perspective and see new possibilities. • Employs a variety of techniques for exploring different options. • Takes responsible and reasonable risks when trying new approaches.
<p>Maintains productivity, quality of work, and morale of group in times of change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates organizational and environmental changes. • Coaches individual team members to find their niche in new, ambiguous and changing circumstances. • Recognizes the impact of stress on individual performance and provides resources to help cope. • Clarifies ambiguous information to reduce uncertainty. • Provides the team feedback on their contributions to organizational objectives. • Encourages the team to be open to opportunities and possibilities regarding change(s). • Accepts responsibility for the results of taking risks.
<p>Works effectively within a variety of situations and with diverse individuals and groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treats each person fairly, instilling mutual understanding, trust and confidence. • Makes accommodations to meet diverse customer needs. • Ensures that the perspectives and interests of internal and external stakeholders are heard and understood. • Makes and modifies team assignments to take advantage of individual strengths. • Gains a broader perspective on issues by working with others. • Learns from the accomplishments and best practices of others.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer or participate in a diverse project team.
- Serve on a social activities committee.
- Conduct brainstorming, systems thinking, and other techniques that might offer new perspectives, ideas or solutions.
- Invest in team training that enables members better to weigh potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Use a personality/behavioral assessment to understand the diversity of the team members.
- Get a coach/mentor for communications help.
- Practice more one-on-one interactions with your staff.
- Learn about different resources on stress management, career development, personal growth, etc.
- Reflect on whether you are resilient and can bounce back from setbacks. If not, then what is holding you back?

Training

- Consider taking a course on dealing with and leading change.
- Bring in a creative thinking workshop for your team.
- Learn about new tools, processes and technologies that can enhance service.
- Consider whether diversity training would be relevant.
- Take training related to interpersonal skills, being open and receptive to others, and dealing with changing situations.

PROBLEM SOLVING (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Identifies and analyzes problems, distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions, and provides solutions to individual and organization problems.

Importance

Problems are often ill-structured situations and may not be recognized as problems until they loom large. Leaders identify emerging problems so that they may be addressed before they become critical and cause damage to the organization or its objectives. Successful problem solving must include the application of critical thinking so as to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant factors, identify the dimensions of the problem, and explore multiple options. Leaders use collaborative problem solving processes to yield a fuller, deeper understanding of the problem, expand the ownership of the situation, focus multiple and diverse resources on the issue, and enhance the likelihood of a successful solution.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

First appointment leaders should be results driven and open to alternatives. They establish team processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. They communicate organizational changes and help the team plan new processes, actions, and short term goals to meet those changes. They apply problem solving techniques to issues of change. Leaders assess the underlying causes and forces behind behavior patterns and organize their resources and activities to deal with longer-term problems and opportunities.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Anticipates problems and identifies steps to prevent their occurrence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the organization’s strategic plan and makes course corrections or modifies unit goals and processes in order to accommodate new and changing circumstances. • Identifies the need for modifications or reengineering by reviewing programs, processes and progress. • Recognizes the interdependencies of all organizational units and collaborates to address problems, maximize resources, share information, and achieve outcomes. • Responds to threats or problems. • Manages personal and organizational sources of conflict to realize long-term improvements. • Recognizes team and team member performance and plans strategically to optimize strengths while minimizing the impact of weaknesses. • Works closely with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives and interests are understood. • Seeks legal and ethical advice when necessary. • Does not allow the policy or resource challenges to slow the progress/productivity of the team.
<p>Solves problems affecting the work of the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns from past actions and shares lessons learned with others. • Facilitates critical thinking throughout the group. • Owns up to mistakes to self and others. • Enables team members to weigh potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility. • Accurately assesses the root causes and forces behind individual or group behavior patterns. • Makes necessary on-the-spot corrections to actions. • Enlists help from appropriate people in problem-solving.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Identifies and evaluates alternative courses of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assumes responsibilities for risks taken and actions embarked upon. • Establishes team processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. • Creates and maintains a diverse collaborative team environment that promotes creativity and open discussion. • Generates multiple solutions to problems and routinely develops and weighs alternatives before settling on a solution. • Learns from past actions and shares lessons learned with others. • Delegates problem-solving to empower others to take the initiative, developing individual team members. • Challenges team members to take a different perspective. • Leads the team in techniques that might offer new perspectives, ideas or solutions.
<p>Implements the changes necessary to make solutions work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps the team plan new processes, actions and short term goals. • Communicates the need for change to meet critical organizational objectives and new realities. • Understands the drivers of people's behavior and the impact of emotions and feelings on a situation. • Ensures employees understand expectations, objectives and processes. • Breaks down complex problems and situations into discrete parts that are easier to understand and to manage. • Facilitates stakeholder understanding of our goals, processes, timelines, roles, and resources. • Measures the success of chosen approaches. • Recognizes when a solution is sufficient enough to achieve results, while tackling underlying causes. • Provides feedback on the team's contribution to organizational objectives and gives credit to those who contributed to the solution. • Identifies and resolves team/unit breakdowns resulting from change.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Become an officer on a community board.
- Volunteer to be on a team/project that is trying to solve an important issue.
- Shadow a higher-level leader who is working on a complex project.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Develop, discuss and review performance measures with your employees.
- Read a book on an applicable topic.
- Interview a good problem solver to learn how he/she does it.
- Join the safety committee of your organization.
- Take up a hobby that requires complex problem solving skills; i.e., chess, Sudoku puzzles, crossword puzzles, etc.

Training

- Learn a variety of modeling techniques, risk analysis and cost benefit analysis techniques.
- Learn how to develop performance plans and use an [Individual Development Plan](#) (IDP).
- Invest in team training for your unit.
- Invest in training that enables members to better weigh potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility.
- Learn about ethical decision-making tools as well as Federal ethics regulations and other laws which might pertain to problems.
- Attend a course on effective communication, change management, problem solving, decision making, conflict management, dealing with difficult people, etc.
- Take an assessment that teaches “how and why people are different” – i.e., Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), or looks at behavioral styles and preferences (i.e. DISC).
- Learn about how groups function and how group dynamics evolve.

TEAM BUILDING (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with stakeholders, fostering commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership capabilities in others by coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

Importance

Team-based approaches to work (formal and informal groups, work groups, committees, etc.) can be an effective way to increase organizational performance. Collaborative work, group work, and team work are forces for productivity, quality, synergy and cost reduction. Teams have a greater diversity of resources which contributes to improved problem solving and to higher productivity. Teams help “socialize” new members, facilitate organizational performance, build leadership skills, and inspire innovation. Teams provide benefits for their members as they learn about the organization(s) and acquire new skills. For some team members, they also serve important personal needs for affiliation and esteem.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

The First Appointment Leader must foster commitment, team spirit, pride, esprit de corps and trust. They facilitate internal group dynamics to optimize performance, build skills through coaching and training, and manage interpersonal (and systemic) conflict. They collaborate within the group to develop and clarify member roles, responsibilities, and norms while clarifying the parameters of authority and available resources. They build the problem solving ability of the group members and the group itself. They communicate the organization’s mission and goals with insight, and enthusiasm, help establish appropriate metrics and objective criteria, and ensure that work is accomplished within established timetables. They instill a sense of opportunity and possibility in the group’s view of change, collaborate with relevant groups to gain information about external conditions that might impact the work of the group, and change course when needed.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes teams to accomplish goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brings the right people together and sustains group processes that help lead to success. • Capitalizes on all aspects of diversity to improve projects. • Recognizes strengths and maximizes the resources of the team. • Collaborates with stakeholders to stay informed of external conditions which might impact the work of the team. • Establishes a team environment of openness. • Negotiates the objectives of the project among team members, clarifies respective contributions and expectations, and enables clear definition of roles within the team. • Establishes appropriate team performance norms.
Establishes and maintains collaborative team processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads group planning processes. • Helps team establish appropriate metrics and objective criteria for success. • Resolves conflict to build group cohesion. • Builds a performance driven team with positive working relationships. • Involves all team members and ensures that all voices are heard and respected. • Facilitates finding common ground. • Helps teams understand and overcome barriers to effective performance. • Uses collaborative decision-making processes to build trust and ownership. • Helps the team generate multiple solutions to problems and approaches to improvement. • Encourages creative, innovative and non-conventional contributions.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Assigns task(s) to the team and delegates responsibilities within the team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sets and communicates clear goals • Builds team skills through coaching and training to accomplish tasks, build relationships, and/or improve processes. • Distributes opportunities and benefits equitably across the entire team. • Coaches team members to work together. • Builds the problem solving ability of the team. • Manages creative talent. • Encourages team members to assume leadership of different functions appropriate to their knowledge and skills.
Manages team performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors the direction of individual and team performance and makes necessary course corrections. • Ensures work is accomplished within established timetables. • Changes course when needed; letting go of what's not working. • Protects the integrity of open, collaborative processes. • Keeps focus on the big picture. • Holds people accountable for responsibilities and good teamwork.
Inspires pride and team spirit among team members.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates a clear picture of the direction the organization is going with insight, energy and enthusiasm. • Creates a team culture that fosters performance, pride and purpose. • Provides feedback on the team's contribution to organizational objectives. • Recommends awards and recognition to celebrate individual and team performance when work supports organizational goals and achieves results. • Coaches, mentors and guides teams and team members in such a way as to foster commitment, team spirit, pride and trust.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to be a coach in a youth sports league, scout leader, etc.
- Volunteer to lead a team.
- Volunteer for a committee in a community organization.
- Function as team member on a team and observe the leader to learn things to do and not do.
- Read a book on team building and team leadership.
- Spend time developing your interpersonal skills through self-awareness.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Create a climate of innovation and experimentation.
- Use your behavior to model the way for others and set the standard.
- Reflect on whether you are comfortable delegating important work to others.

Training

- Take NCTC's course "[Introduction to Management Skills](#)" LED6176.
- Take NCTC's course "[Team Start-Up](#)" LED5118.
- Take NCTC's course "[Team Effectiveness Training](#)" LED5021.
- Take NCTC's "[The Leadership Challenge Workshop](#)" LED6109.
- Take taking a course on team leadership from an outside vendor.
- Take taking a meeting facilitation or meeting management course.
- Take taking a course on project management, task prioritization and/or delegation.

TECHNICAL CREDIBILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Appropriately applies procedures, regulations, standards and policies related to specialized expertise. Combines expertise, administrative processes, and organizational knowledge to make sound, ethical resource recommendations and/or decisions in support of the mission.

Importance

Accomplishing the Service's mission is contingent upon its leaders having expertise across a diverse array of disciplines. The reputation of the FWS is based upon technical credibility in science and in business practices. The Service is a science based organization, using a high level of technical expertise to make decisions and take actions. Leaders with specialized knowledge and technical abilities improve the Service's operations. They inspire confidence among employees, the American public, customers, Congress, stakeholders, and partners. A leader with technical knowledge and integrity helps the Service avoid risk from legal and ethical challenges.

How do First Appointment Leaders Demonstrate This Competency?

First Appointment leaders keep up with advances in their discipline. They ensure that they are operating within the legal, regulatory and policy framework. They accurately identify problems, evaluate alternatives, and recommend appropriate actions.

They recognize their own limitations and consult with others who have the specific, technical expertise required. They are proactive in working with their teams members to identify developmental opportunities to improve all of their technical skills. They are recognized as professionals in their field and work to continue to increase their competence and skills. They are involved in establishing policies and procedures, may present at professional meetings, and are involved in sharing their knowledge by training others, both in training courses and on-the-job.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates expertise in their field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works on research projects in their area of expertise. • Teaches others. • Participates in professional associations, conferences and meetings. • Sets challenging goals for self and group and achieves them. • Participates in a community of practice. • Actively participates and refreshes fundamentals. • Knows where to go for answers to technical questions. • Manages assigned projects and ensures completion.
Has a thorough knowledge of their organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a network of other subject matter experts, both internally and externally. • Actively maintains/uses the collective knowledge in their network. • Makes administrative decisions that follow current Service/organization policies and procedures. • Assigns team responsibilities that distribute team work according to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of team members. • Works to grow their capacity and capability. • Evaluates assignments and determines whether they can be accomplished with their allocated resources.
Understands legal and regulatory policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows where to go for advice when a legal or ethical dilemma is present. • Understands the policies and laws that guide their field of expertise and can find answers to questions related to that field. • Advises others on legal and regulatory guidelines and helps them maintain compliance with standards.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to work on a cross-program team.
- Represent your discipline on a Regional team.
- Volunteer for a detail to the Regional Office.
- Detail to a sister agency with a greater scientific technical focus.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Consider a job swap in or outside your field of expertise.
- Work with NCTC on a course design team, as a peer reviewer, or as an instructor for a course.
- Write white papers for a Regional Director in your area(s) of expertise.
- Answer public questions in an open forum as a Service representative.
- Present Service work to an NGO, and participate in high school job fairs.
- Maintain a personal library on your discipline, subscribe to professional journals, and ensure your team has the “latest and greatest” publications, and circulate materials.
- Publish your research/Service work in governmental and intergovernmental publications.
- Be a mentor to someone junior to you or find a mentor and be a mentee.
- Look “in your own back yard” for learning opportunities.
- Be a member of professional association dealing with specific discipline.
- Consider community involvement within your realm of expertise (science fair judge, volunteer expertise to non-profits, etc).
- Take advantage of public speaking opportunities and consider becoming a member of your local [Toastmasters](#) club.
- Give presentations at lunch meetings (“brown bag” gatherings).
- Network and share your experience with others.

Training

- Do not discount the value of continuing education in your profession.
- Continue to keep up-to-date on your computer skills and technological knowledge.
- Consider hiring a consultant in the technology field of interest to tutor you to accelerate your learning.
- Whenever new technology surfaces, volunteer to learn and try it first.
- Apply to attend conferences or workshops for a national perspective.

USFWS Mission Critical Mid-Level Leader Competencies

Mid-Level Leader

*Team Building Creativity/Innovation
Problem Solving Accountability Partnering
Conflict Management Technical Credibility*

ACCOUNTABILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Assures that effective controls are both developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds their self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within their area of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Importance

Accountability application ranges from individual responsibility for setting and meeting high standards for personal performance to the very definition of government workers as stewards of the commonwealth. It is the vehicle through which value is created for the public dollar, and public services are improved. The accountable individual remains in touch with the changing needs of those who are served, and earns their ongoing trust. Accountability is a mark of a mature worker and is dependent on each individual being held responsible for achieving agreed upon outcomes. It is essential to a well-functioning organization that each individual proactively take the responsibility to follow work through to completion, to provide both quality products/services and quality customer service, while meeting commitments in a timely manner and within budget. Government workers must also hold themselves accountable for protecting the privacy of employees, customers and members of the public. The leader is also accountable for the results of their team.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders must prioritize team/project/unit tasks, clearly communicate guidance about the task including its importance and its elements, and establish deadlines while maintaining both short- and long-term focus on the completion of tasks. They set clear and consistent performance expectations for team managers, project managers and unit groups, review performance against standards and established benchmarks, provide feedback and coach subordinate leaders, and address performance problems in a timely fashion. They build ongoing review into programs/projects to track progress towards stated goals and identify performance gaps enabling course corrections.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Makes efficient and effective use of resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledges strong performance and addresses poor performance among team and group members. • Maintains good overview and control of contract performance. • Maintains good overview and control of project/group budgets and costs.
Takes responsibility for personal and team/group performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes personal responsibility for outcomes. • Anticipates and takes action over impending problems. • Focuses on fixing the problem rather than assigning blame. • Communicates and enacts consequences for performance—both good and bad. • Holds team and project members accountable for achieving results within assigned deadlines. • Guides the development of teams/groups.
Meets or exceeds standards of excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and evaluates personal and team performance standards and adjusts to ensure those standards are being met or exceeded. • Uses a variety of techniques to help the team/group move forward and continually improve. • Builds on the experience and insights of others. • Prioritizes team/project tasks while maintaining focus on end results. • Provides regular feedback and coaches team/group members about their performance. • Develops others to deepen their sense of pride in and commitment to their work.
Ensures compliance with policies and laws while addressing stakeholder needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands organizational expectations and needs. • Understands stakeholder expectations and needs. • Translates Congressional and other stakeholder mandates into effective strategies and achievable programs of action. • Seeks performance feedback from customers, stakeholders, and staff. • Ensures stakeholders understand the benefits and consequences of proposed alternatives or actions.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses a full range of tools to continually review the success of programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses project management tools. • Utilizes basic evaluation strategies and practices to measure program success. • Measures performance against established benchmarks. • Addresses performance problems to improve individual performance and end results in a timely manner.
<p>Disseminate and acts on lessons learned.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies lessons learned from successful and unsuccessful performance. • Makes clear plans for improving organizational performance. • Makes necessary adjustments to processes and strategies. • Uses various communications tools, group affiliations and networks to disseminate knowledge and lessons learned. • Keeps managers informed of valuable lessons learned, as well as project results. • Uses feedback to improve products, processes, services and delivery.
<p>Conducts operations within the legal and ethical framework of the Dept., Service, and organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks legal and ethical advice when not clear how to proceed in a particular circumstance. • Listens to experts and balances various assessments of risk before making important decisions.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Take time to learn applicable policies and procedures.
- Work on setting clear goals with yourself and others, and monitor progress.
- Follow through with positive and negative rewards and consequences.
- Consider whether you are successful at multitasking, and if not, focus on one project at a time.
- Volunteer to lead a large scale project team or community based project.
- Volunteer to be an apprentice on a large-scale project (shadow opportunity).

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Read a book on project management, risk management, evaluation systems, etc.
- Read and understand your program's guidance on ethical policies.
- Give a presentation at a professional society meeting to present your project's results.
- Take a 360-degree assessment tool as a way to receive feedback from others.
- Request permission to shadow an experienced leader you admire.
- Ask to fill in for your supervisor in an "acting" role when the opportunity exists.

Training

- Apply for the [Stepping Up To Leadership Program](#).
- Attend a course on scientific ethics and integrity.
- Attend a course on project management.
- Attend the NCTC course "[Introduction to Management Skills](#)".

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Identifies and takes steps to prevent potential situations that could result in unpleasant confrontations. Manages and resolves conflicts and disagreements in a positive and constructive manner to minimize negative impact.

Importance

Performance and productivity within an organization are significantly impaired when conflict is not anticipated and managed. Competency in Conflict Management, which is based on one's ability to inspire confidence and engender trust in all parties involved, is reflected in the ability to recognize, resolve and/or manage disagreements that have the potential to grow into confrontations that undermine the culture and performance of a team or organization. It is critical to learn from disagreements by understanding and analyzing the source of the dispute. It is also important to work strategically to establish organizational cultures and procedures that value the basic rules of civility and encourage divergent thinking.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level Leaders must identify the potential for conflict that may arise from work schedules, assignments, working conditions or changes in policies and/or procedures. They should listen actively to employee concerns, encourage open discussion, seek common ground in settling disagreements, and assist others in seeing the cause of a problem, distinguishing it from its symptoms. They must know and be able to effectively use in-house resources to manage conflict, display negotiation skills, and work with Employee Assistance Programs, union groups, training sources, and other entities to promote the cultural health of the organization.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates self-understanding and emotional control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the causes and consequences of feelings. • Is attentive to emotional cues. • Is able to monitor and reflect on emotions. • Is able to engage, prolong or detach from an emotional state depending on its utility.
Demonstrates empathy and understanding of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the emotional expressions of other people. • Actively listens to the concerns of employees regarding issues such as organizational changes, quality of work life, and other issues that might cause employees worry or stress. • Sees opportunities for and orchestrates positive outcomes in conflict situations. • Appreciates and honors the emotions of others and recognizes the needs related to these feelings.
Analyzes personal, structural and other sources of conflict within the team or organization and plans for long-lasting, long-term improvements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spots the potential for conflict, brings issues into the open, and helps de-escalate them. • Ensures that subordinates have training that helps them to understand the perspective(s) of others. • Follows up on conflict issues that require it. • Works with others to identify and remove obstacles to understanding and a positive workplace culture. • Encourages debate and open discussion. • Actively involves others in planning that might circumvent conflict; such as the development of work schedules, assignments, rewards, etc. • Coaches, teaches, counsels, and motivates employees towards greater mutual respect and understanding. • Refers complex conflicts and others that are not amenable to informal resolution to mediation specialists. • Provides employees with information regarding mediation services and other employee assistance programs.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Develops a culture of inclusiveness, respect and civility that values and respects different ideas and preferences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates through own actions respect and inclusiveness to subordinates, staff, and management. • Ensures the ability of employees to function together in the workplace environment. • Exercises authority as necessary to maintain civility, inclusiveness and fairness. • Promotes objectivity.
Uses conflict management skills and continues to enhance them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies and helps others see the root of a problem and distinguish its symptoms from its causes. • Promotes collaborative approaches to problem solving. • Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate policies and procedures in dealing with conflicts. • Understands the difference between positions and interests and can help others find common ground. • Seeks opportunities to develop conflict management skills.
Embraces change and recognizes the role that change has in contributing to possible conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipates the range of reactions that typically occur when change is introduced. • Communicates the impending change and the forces that have driven it to reduce resistance and/or conflict. • Communicates the benefits that will accrue as a result of planned change.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to lead committees--especially if it may be contentious.
- Volunteer to work on a multi-disciplinary project team with varied stakeholders.
- Volunteer to facilitate meetings where disagreement is possible.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Read case studies that involve successful resolution of contentious issues.
- Interview someone who you see as a good conflict manager for advice and suggestions.
- Read a book about resolving conflict at work and at home.
- Strive to maintain a healthy balance between work life and home life.
- Educate yourself about the process of arbitration, and consider using a third party to resolve extremely challenging situations.

Training

- Take change management training if applicable.
- Take an assessment specifically targeted at conflict management to gain more self-awareness about how you resolve conflict personally.
- Seek out formal conflict management training.
- Take NCTC's "[Effective Facilitation](#)" LED5122 training.
- Take team building training for your intact team – have an outside professional work with your group.
- Take formal stress management training.
- Take improving your influencing and negotiating skills through formal training such as NCTC's "Applying Collaboration to Environmental Issues" OUT8122 and NCTC's "Interest-Based Negotiation".

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Develops new insights into situations and applies innovative solutions to make organizational improvements; supports a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation; designs and implements new and innovative programs and/or processes.

Importance

Creative and innovative thinking leads to new insights, novel approaches, fresh perspectives, new ways of understanding and conceiving of things, and leads one to see the world in imaginative and different ways. Creativity and innovation represent a core competency in successful organizations that are able to anticipate and meet strategic challenges including change, advancing technology, an increasingly diverse work force, and constant budget constraints. This is about exploring all options in a systematic way, one that also moves thinking past conventional mental and organizational boundaries. It is using one's full range of skills, knowledge, and experience to search for and address the complex causes, not just symptoms, of problems and to imagine and pose improvements to the organization. At the higher levels it means creating a culture and the organizational means that encourage, support and reward innovative thinking and continual improvement.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders model the concepts of innovation and creativity. They encourage critical thinking, innovative problem solving, brainstorming and other techniques that support the generation of alternative approaches. They recruit for diversity of thought, talent and perspective and invest in training that leads to better analysis, problem-solving, and creative solutions. They demonstrate and encourage the use of innovative thinking and problem-solving approaches while acknowledging and rewarding innovation and creativity.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates commitment to personal and organizational improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies opportunities to improve team processes, products, and service delivery. • Develops ideas and implements change. • Models creative thinking and problem solving. • Recognizes when a situation calls for or could benefit from a different approach. • Sets high expectations for continuous staff development. • Communicates a personal commitment to continual organizational improvement.
Offers new ideas and is open to new ideas from others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes team/unit processes and strategies that look beyond traditional boundaries, ideas and approaches. • Challenges team/unit members to look at issues/situations from different perspectives. • Allows and encourages creative, innovative, and non-conventional contributions, even when this leads to conflict. • Adapts own thinking to meet changing circumstances, unexpected constraints, or challenges. • Accepts reasonable risk.
Generates new approaches using conventional and divergent thinking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages others to employ a variety of techniques for exploring different options. • Leads the work group to use brainstorming, systems thinking, and other techniques that might offer new perspectives, ideas or solutions. • Encourages the work group to identify the best solution(s) to problems by thinking past simple cause and effect understandings.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Encourages and supports a culture that is open to alternatives and non-conventional thought.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes offering new ideas and perspectives safe and valued. • Develops and weighs alternatives before settling on a solution. • Encourages flexibility of thought as challenges and opportunities arise. • Establishes opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices. • Establishes mechanisms that provide continuing feedback on processes and services. • Understands the role of conflict in creative processes and can manage such conflict towards positive outcomes.
Recognizes, encourages and employs the creative capacity of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively recruits for diversity of thought, talent, and perspective among team/group members. • Facilitates team roles and processes that take greatest advantage of creative talent and innovative thought • Establishes/influences the staffing strategies and work processes that encourage the consideration of multiple approaches and non-conventional thought. • Uses performance measures that encourage and reward new ideas. • Works with other teams, groups, and disciplines to achieve broader perspective on issues and to build on the good work of others. • Works closely with internal and external customers and stakeholders to ensure that all perspectives and interests are understood and encourages their contributions.
Uses a variety of analytical tools to assess the feasibility of alternative approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invests in training that enables self and others to better weigh potential solutions and initiatives for appropriateness and feasibility and enhance risk analysis and decision-making skills. • Understands the role of evaluation and testing and applies it in creative processes.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leadership (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Work on a task force that requires you to sell ideas and try to influence the opinion of decision makers, either within the Service or in an outside community organization.
- Apply for a job swap/detail that would require you to try new approaches.
- Ask more questions, and be sure you are defining the problem correctly.
- Remove unnecessary constraints, and break out of your comfort zone.
- Generate ideas without passing judgment first.
- Be open to the creative suggestions of others.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Get involved on teams with people that are not like you.
- Read a book on creative thinking and innovation.
- Try some creative arts such as creative writing, sculpture, music or art.
- Practice brainstorming out loud with others.
- Change your daily routine and try out some new ways of doing business.
- Keep an open mind while attending a meeting of an organization that manages resources differently. Observe how they do it – control your emotions, and you may learn something new.

Training

- Attend a creative thinking workshop.
- Learn how to effectively use different analytical tools to solve problems.
- Attend and join your local [Toastmasters](#) club.
- Apply for the FWS [Stepping Up to Leadership Program](#).

PARTNERING (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS & COMMUNICATIONS)

Definition

Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities, collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

Importance

Collaboration is a critical dimension of modern leadership in public service today. Highly effective government today requires partnerships, coalitions, and other collaborative, participative approaches. Leaders must be ready to seek out and work with others to make interdependent decisions and implement solutions based on an understanding of the issues and resources that partnering with others brings. The Service must move away from being rule-based and be guided by principles and outcomes. This will require leaders who involve others, manage change, and communicate an overarching mission and common purpose. Partnering provides the opportunity to build an effective community between the Service and its stakeholders, reduce or avoid duplications, establish a team culture, and deliver superior service.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level Leaders search out opportunities to collaborate across organizational boundaries. They realize that partnerships are often required to accomplish the mission of the Service. They develop and manage partnerships by effectively planning and committing human and financial resources to the partnership effort while monitoring and evaluating progress and achievements. They facilitate cross-functional collaboration and information sharing among varied constituencies. They identify, build upon, and disseminate partnering lessons and facilitate training that supports the formation and maintenance of productive relationships. They establish a healthy partnering culture that creates opportunities and incentives to learn and share knowledge with others. They identify areas of potential conflict and work to avoid that conflict by establishing procedures, clarifying problems early on, and working to resolve those problems quickly and they take time to really get to know their partners and their needs/concerns and develop a trust/comfort level with them.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes and supports a partnering culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses collaborative work initiatives to increase the effectiveness of the station/unit. • Encourages and participates in assignments with internal and external stakeholders to develop partnerships where appropriate. • Works to maintain a relationship of trust and commitment with various stakeholders. • Shares ownership in, benefits of, and responsibility for the success of the partnership. • Rewards active exploration of partnering possibilities. • Reports to upper management the lessons learned from implemented partnerships. • Creates opportunities and incentives to learn and share knowledge with others about partnering successes and opportunities. • Facilitates training in areas that supports the ability to form and maintain productive relationships.
Creates and develops partnerships to achieve common goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to maximize strategic opportunities by aligning and integrating efforts, core processes, activities and resources with partners. • Understands the types of cooperative arrangements (from networking to complex multi-sector collaboration) and chooses the one appropriate to achieving set goals. • Ensures that lessons learned are disseminated and built upon. • Shares innovative partnering ideas with others. • Realigns resources, processes and approaches proactively. • Facilitates cross-functional collaboration, information sharing and establishment of shared work goals. • Empowers others to develop partnerships while realizing that some partnerships take longer to develop. • Identifies appropriate goals with concrete objectives around which to create partnerships.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Manages existing partnerships and monitors achievements and progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the operational implications of the partnership. • Effectively plans for the commitment of time, skills, financial resources, external support, commitment and personnel to the partnership effort. • Understands which resources, roles and responsibilities have been committed to by each partner. • Ensures that procedures are in place to evaluate the achievements of partnerships. • Ensures that innovative partnerships operate within legal and regulatory boundaries. • Selects proper legal/ethical agreements (i.e., MOU vs. MOA vs. 501(c)3, etc.) and understands responsibility and authority as signatory/participant. • Ensures that the Service treats all partners fairly and ethically. • Sets clear parameters and goals with partners to avoid misunderstandings

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-Level Leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Get involved in multi-agency teams and cross-program activities.
- Be a representative for the Service on a committee/project.
- Volunteer to lead a cross-program committee.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Learn about other agencies/programs by doing some individual research to see if there are partnering opportunities.
- Learn about the different type of funding mechanisms/partnership agreements available to you.
- Read books on team leadership and establishing partnerships.
- Shadow someone who is considered a partnership champion.
- Initiate a partnership.
- Identify a resource issue and the stakeholders to see if partnership opportunities exist for the Service.
- Learn about different financial agreements available for funding partnerships.
- Gain experience writing effective project proposals involving multiple partners.

Training

- Take partnership courses at NCTC such as Building Partnerships Between Gateway Communities and Public Lands (ITV Workshop) and [Conservation Partnerships](#) OUT8110.
- Attend training on team leadership/team building from NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Attend training on interpersonal relationships and communication at NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Attend training on political savvy.

PROBLEM SOLVING (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Identifies and analyzes problems, distinguishes between relevant and irrelevant information to make logical decisions, and provides solutions to individual and organization problems.

Importance

Problems are often ill-structured situations and may not be recognized as problems until they loom large. Leaders identify emerging problems so that they may be addressed before they become critical and cause damage to the organization or its objectives. Successful problem solving must include the application of critical thinking so as to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant factors, identify the dimensions of the problem, and explore multiple options. Leaders use collaborative problem solving processes to yield a fuller, deeper understanding of the problem, expand the ownership of the situation, focus multiple and diverse resources on the issue, and enhance the likelihood of a successful solution.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-level leaders must routinely review programs, processes, and progress, keeping alert to emerging issues and the need for modifications or reengineering. When issues arise, leaders clearly articulate the problem and work to find the root cause(s), not focus on the symptoms and superficial causes. They consider all aspects of the problem, identify connections, and look for ways to improve the situation. They utilize individual, collaborative, lateral, innovative, radical and/or unconventional approaches by involving partners and/or stakeholders when generating alternatives. They consider interim solutions while addressing underlying causes, identify priorities and evaluate alternatives, implement solutions, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their decision(s) in achieving organizational goals.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Anticipates problems and identifies steps to prevent their occurrence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviews projects, processes and progress, keeping alert to the need for modifications or reengineering. • Identifies gaps in information and modifies data gathering/analysis processes to fill those gaps. • Prioritizes issues and problems, judging importance, feasibility, appropriateness and consequences in selecting those to address. • Knows when information is adequate for decision making. • Recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action on internal and external stakeholders. • Understands the operational implications of a strategy and looks beyond solutions that are merely expedient. • Recognizes the different perspectives and desires of internal and external stakeholders. • Effectively manages conflicts between stakeholder desires and policy or resource availability. • Monitors staff satisfaction, employee relationships and workplace climate to anticipate potential problems/concerns.
<p>Analyzes current situations, issues, approaches and information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes opportunities for the exchange of ideas and best practices. • Encourages and shares new ideas and successful approaches with internal and external stakeholders. • Establishes mechanisms that provide feedback on processes and services. • Monitors and evaluates current conditions and shifts resources and approaches as necessary when priorities change. • Solicits advice from others on the implications of any trade-off decisions that may need to be made. • Invests in training for self and others that enhances the range of analytical and modeling tools for the group. • Invests in training for self and others that enhance risk analysis and decision-making skills. • Evaluates staff satisfaction, employee relationships and workplace climate to identify problems/concerns.

<p>Solves problems affecting the work of the organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes when a situation calls for, or could benefit from, a different approach. • Identifies potential resolutions to the problem using critical and creative thinking. • Adapts thinking to meet changing circumstances, unexpected constraints or challenges. • Manages conflict in creative processes toward positive outcomes. • Shares new approaches with others and encourages input from others and the exploration and adoption of new ideas. • Communicates a clear understanding of internal/external stakeholder needs and makes these central to decision-making and service delivery. • Seeks and identifies solutions to problems which maximize the benefit to the resource within the parameters of legal and regulatory boundaries. • Empowers others by delegating authority and responsibility to others who may be closer to the problem and holds them accountable. • Accepts reasonable risk. • Assumes responsibility for risks taken and actions embarked upon.
<p>Uses a variety of problem-solving techniques and collaborative approaches to identify and evaluate alternative courses of action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses effective group processes to enhance problem-solving and decision-making abilities, to increase participation and ownership, and to enhance the likelihood for a successful solution. • Utilizes collaborative approaches and values a range of perspectives and input from others. • Networks to address common issues. • Fosters shared “ownership” of the problem without assigning blame. • Manages conflict, ensures that all voices are heard, and steers the group towards mutually beneficial solutions. • Assesses lessons learned from actions and identifies potential improvements and/or course corrections. • Utilizes decision making tools that distinguish among choices in ethical dilemmas and risk assessment.

Implements the changes necessary to make solutions work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops and implements an appropriate action plan for change, taking into account what, who, why, when, and how.• Communicates change using vision, clear and detailed steps, and persuasive skills to help people realign their work and energy behind the new approach,• Informs employees how their work effort is related to the change and how they will be expected to participate in the new effort.• Delegates effectively and strategically in response to change or crisis.• Encourages innovation within broad guidelines and clear goals to foster ownership of change.• Communicates decisions made and the reasons behind them to keep others in the loop.• Advises others of possible impacts of decisions made and actions pursued.
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Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-level leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Become an officer on a community board.
- Volunteer to be on a team/project that is trying to solve an important issue.
- Shadow a higher-level leader who is working on a complex project.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Develop, discuss and review performance measures with your employees.
- Read a book on an applicable topic.
- Interview a good problem solver to learn how he/she does it.
- Join the safety committee of your organization.
- Take up a hobby that requires complex problem solving skills; e.g., chess, Sudoku puzzles, etc.
- Determine whether you are defining the problem correctly.
- Develop a philosophical stance toward mistakes and failures in problem solving. Clearly articulate to others what your philosophy is.
- Force yourself out of your comfort zone.
- Be aware of analysis paralysis. Recognize whether your perfectionism is contributing to the problem.
- Reflect on whether you get “hung up on the process” and miss the big picture.

Training

- Learn a variety of modeling techniques, risk analysis and cost benefit analysis techniques.
- Take training in effective communications, crucial conversations, or difficult conversations.
- Take training in change management.
- Take training in problem solving and decision making.
- Learn about ethical decision-making tools as well as Federal ethics regulations and other laws which might pertain to problems.

- Take an assessment that teaches “how and why people are different”—i.e. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), or looks at behavioral styles and preferences (i.e. DISC).
- Take training that teaches you to deal with ambiguity.
- Take training that helps you set priorities better.

TEAM BUILDING (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Inspires, motivates, and guides others toward goal accomplishments. Consistently develops and sustains cooperative working relationships. Encourages and facilitates cooperation within the organization and with stakeholders, fostering commitment, team spirit, pride, trust. Develops leadership in others through coaching, mentoring, rewarding, and guiding employees.

Importance

Team-based approaches to work (formal and informal groups, work groups, committees, etc.) can be an effective way to increase organizational performance. Collaborative work, group work, and team work are forces for productivity, quality, synergy, and cost reduction. Teams have a greater diversity of resources which contributes to improved problem solving and to higher productivity. Teams help “socialize” new members, facilitate organizational performance, build leadership skills, and inspire innovation. Teams provide benefits for their members as they learn about the organization(s) and acquire new skills. For some team members, they also serve important personal needs for affiliation and esteem.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders form and task teams to maximize successful outcomes by selecting team members that represent diverse interests, specialties, and technical expertise. They identify team members to achieve both the immediate task and to develop positive and ongoing working relationships throughout the organization and use team leadership assignments to foster leadership talent throughout the unit. They assist with the team launch by clearly communicating team purpose, expectations, parameters of authority, resources and other relevant information. Mid-level leaders communicate, implement, and coordinate the team’s work or results with relevant workgroups and advocate for the work of the team with other groups and with higher level managers. They support the team in obtaining resources, expertise, and the cooperation needed to achieve results. They provide (or acquire) the coaching/training needed to achieve results, enhance group processes, and make better decisions. They also recommend or approve formal recognition for the work of the team.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes teams as needed to accomplish goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies whether a team is appropriate for the particular task/project. • Understands the various types of formal and informal teams and selects the appropriate style that will best meet the goals. • Evaluates personnel, time and other resources to develop teams that will best achieve the goals. • Plans team membership to achieve the immediate task as well as to develop positive and ongoing working relationships that span the organization. • Selects team members that represent diverse interests, specialties, and technical expertise.
Assigns task(s) to the team and delegates responsibilities within the team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicates team purpose, expectations, and parameters of authority, resources and other relevant information. • Uses team assignments to develop collaboration, managerial, and leadership skills for the organization. • Invests in training for self and others that enhance team building, group process, and decision-making skills.
Supports the team and advocates for its success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports innovation by empowering the team to pursue its goals and make decisions without micromanaging. • Supports the team in getting resources, expertise, and cooperation necessary to achieve results. • Monitors on-going individual and team performance. • Establishes mechanisms for the exchange of ideas and best practices with other teams. • Manages and works to resolve conflict within the team. • Advocates for the work of the team with other groups and higher level managers. • Recommends or approves formal recognition for work of the team.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Mid-level leader (GS-11/12) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to be a coach in a youth sports league, scout leader, etc.
- Volunteer to lead a team.
- Work on a committee in a community organization.
- Create a climate of innovation and experimentation.
- Function as team member on a team, and observe the leader to learn things to do and not do.
- Read a book on team building and team leadership and motivating others.
- Spend time developing your interpersonal skills through your own self-awareness.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Use your behavior to model the way for others and set the standard.
- Reflect on whether you are comfortable delegating important work to others.
- Utilize the skills of a team coach to help you problem solve and get an objective opinion while providing you with feedback.
- Structure work so that you can have fun while working.
- Reflect on whether all the team members are committed to the team vision.
- Reflect on whether you create a climate that enables people to perform their best (or worst), whether it is intentional or unintentional.
- Reflect on whether you are too much of a hard driver, and if you are just interested in getting the work out of people. If so, consider the impact and effect this may be having on your team.

Training

- Take NCTC's course "[Effective Facilitation](#)" LED5122.
- Take NCTC's course "[Introduction to Management Skills](#)" LED6176.
- Take NCTC's course "[Team Start-Up](#)" LED5118.

- Take NCTC's course "[Team Effectiveness Training](#)" LED5021.
- Take NCTC's "[The Leadership Challenge Workshop](#)" LED6109.
- Take taking a course on team leadership from an outside vendor.
- Take taking a meeting facilitation or meeting management course.
- Take taking a course on project management, task prioritization and/or delegation

TECHNICAL CREDIBILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Appropriately applies procedures, regulations, standards and policies related to specialized expertise. Combines expertise, administrative processes, and organizational knowledge to make sound, ethical resource recommendations and/or decisions in support of the mission.

Importance

Accomplishing the Service's mission is contingent upon its leaders having expertise across a diverse array of disciplines. The reputation of the FWS is based upon technical credibility in science and in business practices. The Service is a science based organization, using a high level of technical expertise to make decisions and take actions. Leaders with specialized knowledge and technical abilities improve the Service's operations. They inspire confidence among employees, the American public, customers, Congress, stakeholders, and partners. A leader with technical knowledge and integrity helps the Service avoid risk from legal and ethical challenges.

How do Mid-Level Leaders (GS-11/12) Demonstrate This Competency?

Mid-Level leaders keep up with advances in their discipline. They ensure that they are operating within the proper legal, regulatory and policy framework. They accurately identify problems, evaluate alternatives, and recommend appropriate actions. They recognize their own limitations and consult with others who have the specific, technical expertise required. They are proactive in working with their employees to identify developmental opportunities to improve the technical skills of the team. They are recognized as experts in their field and as such may publish manuscripts, present at professional meetings, and/or be involved in training others.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Demonstrates expertise in his/her field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishes research he/she conducted. • Teaches others his/her craft. • Presents at conferences and meetings. • Takes a leadership role in professional associations, conferences, and meetings. • Sets challenging goals for self and group and achieves them. • Participates and actively promotes participation of others in a community of practice. • Actively participates and refreshes fundamentals by continuing to expand his/her knowledge base.
Has a thorough knowledge of his/her organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a network of other subject matter experts, both internally and externally. • Actively maintains/uses the collective knowledge in their network. • Makes administrative decisions that follow current Service/organization policies and procedures. • Assigns team responsibilities that distribute team work according to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of team members. • Works to grow the capacity and capability of team members. • Evaluates assignments and determines whether they can be accomplished with their allocated resources/ability.
Understands legal and regulatory policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finds the answers to questions. • Identifies the steps needed to take a project from initiation to completion. • Knows where to go for advice when a legal or ethical dilemma is present. • Understands the policies and laws that guide his/her field of expertise and can find answers to questions related to that field. • Advises others on legal and regulatory guidelines and helps them maintain compliance with standards.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the First Appointment Leader level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Represent your discipline on a National level team.
- Volunteer for a detail to the Washington Office.
- Detail to another agency with a different technical focus or on a cross-program team.
- Detail to a sister agency with a greater scientific technical focus.
- Focus on a global perspective in your area of expertise.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Seek a leadership position in a professional association in your discipline.
- Consider a job swap in or outside your field of expertise.
- Work with NCTC on a course design team, as a peer reviewer, or as an instructor for a course.
- Write white papers for a Regional Director in your area(s) of expertise.
- Answer public questions in an open forum as a Service representative.
- Present Service work to an NGO, and participate in high school job fairs.
- Maintain a personal library on your discipline, subscribe to professional journals, and ensure your team has the “latest and greatest” publications, and circulate materials.
- Publish your research/Service work in governmental and intergovernmental publications.
- Be a mentor to someone junior to you or find a mentor and be a mentee.
- Look “in your own back yard” for learning opportunities.
- Be a member of professional association dealing with specific discipline.
- Consider community involvement within your realm of expertise (science fair judge, volunteer expertise to non-profits, etc).
- Take advantage of public speaking opportunities and consider becoming a member of your local [Toastmasters](#) club.
- Give presentations at lunch meetings (“brown bag” gatherings).
- Network and share your experience with others.

Training

- Do not discount the value of continuing education in your profession.
- Continue to keep up-to-date on your computer skills and technological knowledge.
- Consider hiring a consultant in the technology field of interest to tutor you to accelerate your learning.
- Whenever new technology surfaces, volunteer to learn and try it first.
- Apply to attend international conferences or workshops for a global perspective.

USFWS Mission Critical Senior Leader Competencies

Senior Leader

*Decisiveness Partnering Accountability
Influencing/Negotiating External Awareness
Strategic Thinking Developing Others*

ACCOUNTABILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Assures that effective controls are both developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds their self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within their area of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Importance

Accountability application ranges from individual responsibility for setting and meeting high standards for personal performance to the very definition of government workers as stewards of the commonwealth. It is the vehicle through which value is created for the public dollar, and public services are improved. The accountable individual remains in touch with the changing needs of those who are served, and earns their ongoing trust. Accountability is a mark of a mature worker and is dependent on each individual being held responsible for achieving agreed upon outcomes. It is essential to a well-functioning organization that each individual proactively take the responsibility to follow work through to completion, to provide both quality products/services and quality customer service, while meeting commitments in a timely manner and within budget. Government workers must also hold themselves accountable for protecting the privacy of employees, customers and members of the public. The leader is also accountable for the results of their team.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Organizational success requires all employees be held accountable for achieving agreed upon outcomes so senior leaders must establish a positive performance culture throughout the organization and develop and maintain a strategic framework for accomplishing the tasks of the organization. They oversee the establishment, development, promulgation, monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement of an organization-wide performance management system and ensure that work priorities, performance standards, return on investment and time expended are consistent with the overall strategic direction. Senior leaders must work broadly both within the organization (division) and with stakeholders to create a shared vision which balances and reconciles interests. They must make sound decisions based on research, benchmarking, and evidence and never allow personal advantage or political pressure to dictate actions or decisions that work against the mission of the agency.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Establishes an environment for success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates and implements sound strategies to accomplish the goals of the Service. • Operates with personal integrity in all actions and decisions by not allowing personal advantage or political pressure to dictate actions or decisions. • Ensures that subordinates have the tools and resources necessary to accomplish their job. • Develops strategic plans to allocate resources in a way designed to achieve the Service mission. • Operates within established policies, regulations and laws. • Promotes innovation, efficiency and greater effectiveness of programs through the use of appropriate business tools. • Implements HR strategies that result in the hiring and development of high quality staff whose skills match the changing needs of the organization. • Leverages the resources with other public and private organizations when beneficial to the Service's mission.
Takes responsibility for personal and organizational performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursues excellence diligently. • Addresses performance issues. • Seeks feedback regarding performance. • Seeks self-development opportunities. • Ensures that employee performance plans focus on accountability for results.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Continually evaluates and improves policies and programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a shared vision. • Makes decisions using the best available information (ex. research, consultants, peers, cost data, etc.). • Reviews programs to ensure that they remain relevant, appropriate and effective. • Develops and utilizes information systems and processes to support ongoing review and evaluation. • Uses lessons learned to make program improvements. • Takes the initiative to share insights, information, effective program models and evaluation results with others. • Distinguishes clearly between failure of a policy or program itself vs. operational failures due to implementation and acts accordingly.
Conscientiously assesses and manages risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes and supports risks that are ethical, legal, reasoned and commensurate with potential gain. • Assesses organizational risks. • Empowers others to experiment and take risks by establishing and communicating clear guidelines for others.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Senior Leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Participate on or lead an organizational review team.
- Participate in performance setting or goals setting for an organization.
- Lead workshops or seminars on projects, issues, and practices relevant to the organization.
- Ensure you know applicable policies and procedures. If in doubt, do research.
- Follow through with positive and negative rewards and consequences.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Work with OIG during a program PART review.
- Serve on an interview or application review panel for mid-level leader positions and competitive training opportunities.
- Take a 360-degree assessment tool as a way to receive feedback from others.
- Obtain relevant professional certifications.
- Actively seek out a mentor and/or coach.
- Stay current on best practices in your profession.
- Get actively involved in professional societies.
- Volunteer to fill in for your supervisor in an “acting” role when the opportunity exists.

Training

- Apply for the Service’s [Advanced Leadership Development Program \(ALDP\)](#).
- Attend training on the performance management system.
- Attend time management training and/or priority setting training.
- Stay current on ethics training.
- Take training at [The Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) of the Office of Personnel Management.

DECISIVENESS (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

Importance

As the pace, degree, and “unpredictability” of change escalates, sound, well-informed decisions that are made in a timely manner (often with incomplete data) and with a commitment to action are essential for satisfactory job performance at every level of the organization. Note that decisiveness reflects the skills essential to problem solving together with a resoluteness of character and a commitment to action, unless reliable and credible information arises that requires reevaluation of the decision.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Senior Leaders demonstrate decisiveness by identifying, developing and implementing policies and procedures that encourage decision-making and action orientation throughout the organization. They must balance analysis with action. They must identify and act promptly upon opportunities and threats to the organization while allocating resources necessary to achieve the organization’s mission/goals. They evaluate the potential and actual impact of decisions on subordinate managers, staff members, and external stakeholders. Senior Leaders must analyze situations and prepare scenarios for crisis situations that may occur within their sphere of influence to be able to lead decisively regardless of circumstances. To prepare themselves for crucial decisions, they must reflect on past actions and must lead an organization which gathers and analyses lessons learned. Senior Leaders must balance courage and wisdom.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Takes action and makes timely decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commits the organization to a course of action and provides the resources to accomplish it. • Thinks and acts quickly and logically even when there are no clear instructions. • Formulates objectives and strategies under pressure or in complex situations. • Thinks and acts quickly and effectively in crisis. • Responds flexibly when planned actions don't work. • Removes obstacles and overcomes resistance in order to achieve objectives.
Possesses self awareness and confidence in one's decisions and actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates courage when making difficult decisions. • Makes decisions with the organization's best interest in mind, over personal preferences. • Actively seeks feedback on decisions. • Accepts responsibility for the consequences of own decisions. • Responds appropriately to questions and challenges about a decision by articulating the rationale for the decision.
Takes reasonable and ethical risks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assesses the potential gain or loss associated with the risk. • Takes reasoned, educated and informed risks to achieve agency/organization goals. • Develops and implements contingency plans as necessary. • Empowers others to take risks, supports them when things go wrong and expects them to learn from setbacks and failures. • Seeks and implements outside the box thinking and creative solutions.
Gains commitment of others on decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides background information regarding decisions to full range of stakeholders. • Confirms others' understanding of issues, options and actions, and solicits input as appropriate. • Influences others using formal and informal channels to gain support for decisions. • Develops and implements strategic communications plans.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Senior Leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Seek out opportunities to serve in “Acting” role for supervisor, and potentially in Senior Leader positions in other programs.
- Seek out leadership roles in community organizations (as coach, referee, etc.)
- Seek out a variety of experiences throughout your career (internal and external).
- Volunteer for an assignment outside of your technical expertise (outside your comfort zone).
- Volunteer to lead project or task force.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Facilitate meetings internally and externally to help groups get to a decision.
- Experiment with creative and “risky” solutions in your own program.
- Seek out a coach or other role model for advice.
- Meet with local political, NGOs, community and professional groups to build your network.
- Read the book “Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher and William Ury and “Getting Past No, Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation” by William Ury.
- Reflect on whether you state as facts things that are really biases, opinions or assumptions.
- Study other decision makers such as Bill Gates and Winston Churchill. Pay attention to how they made decisions in their life and careers. Consider what things they did that you could apply to yourself.
- Reflect on whether you thoroughly define the problem and do enough analysis before making a decision.

Training

- Seek training in dealing with difficult people and difficult conversations.

- Take training on documenting/taking adverse personnel actions.
- Consider whether facilitation training would help you lead to better decisions.
- Take training on goal setting and establishing priorities.

DEVELOPING OTHERS (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

Importance

Employees play a critical role in the success and strategic agility of the Service. People will only achieve what they are truly capable of when they are supported by ongoing development initiatives, an organizational culture of learning and idea exchange, and leadership that takes the initiative to help others by providing opportunities, direction, support, and a positive role model. Developing others is the internal organizational expression of service motivation.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Senior leaders assess and identify talent and potential and foster these through a broad range of development strategies. They work with their employees to define developmental goals and expectations and link them to organization goals and objectives. They should assess the effectiveness of training and development initiatives and work with their employees to incorporate their new learning and skills. Senior Leaders design and implement knowledge management systems to transfer learning and share it across the organization.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Develops IDPs in concert with employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes employees' skills and aspirations and work with employees to identify appropriate developmental activities. • Ensures that identified developmental activities address needed competencies and organizational needs. • Measures effectiveness of all training and development initiatives.
Supports a "learning organization" culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies tools and techniques of knowledge management to capture explicit learning and share it widely across the organization. • Identifies and disseminates best practices from high-performing organizations with similar missions. • Helps the members of the organization learn from customers and stakeholders and to translate that learning into improved ways of performing. • Creates opportunities for employees to contribute their views in a risk-free environment to include innovative ideas and process improvements. • Supports knowledge sharing and the expression of new ideas. • Participates in setting expectations for learning.
Uses effective coaching techniques.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and implements performance management systems to maximize employee talent and contributions. • Provides opportunities for employees to use newly learned skills. • Models expected behaviors. • Pushes down decision making to lower levels in order to develop talent when practical. • Recognizes and communicates contributions and progress towards goals. • Understands the strategic advantage of building on employee strengths and talents.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Mentors others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Counsels employees on the culture of the organization.• Assists employees in developing networks.• Explores career opportunities with employees.• Helps employees identify their core values and aspirations.• Serves as a “sounding board” to help others identify their options.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the senior leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer to serve as a formal or informal mentor to a Service employee.
- Serve as a mentor in a community organization.
- Be a coach/leader for a community youth group (sports team coach, scout leader, church group leader, etc.)

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Find your own mentor or coach in or outside of the organization.
- Focus effort and time on one of your own employees who needs guidance and support.
- Subscribe to newsletters about successful organizations and business practices, such as Gallup.
- Actively participate in organizational “retreats” and volunteer to organize one.
- Volunteer to serve as an NCTC instructor for a training course.
- Conduct workshops/brown bag lunches – share your knowledge with others.
- Read books to expand your knowledge base.
- Develop good performance plans for all of your employees with measurable criteria.
- Become more knowledgeable about giving constructive feedback to others. Establish a buddy system so people can get continuing feedback.
- Give the people under your level the opportunity to have assignments outside of their functional area.
- Reflect on whether you are equitable in how challenging work assignments are parceled out in your organization.

Training

- Take additional supervisory training if warranted.
- Take NCTC’s [“Coaching for Effective Performance”](#) LED6179 course.

- Participate in “brown bag seminars” and other informal learning opportunities.
- Facilitate teambuilding training for your work group.
- Consider taking a class on writing performance plans.
- Set aside quality time to spend discussing your employees goals and how they align with organizational goals.
- Apply for the Service’s [Advanced Leadership Development Program \(ALDP\)](#).

EXTERNAL AWARENESS (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Identifies and keeps up-to-date on key national and international policies and economic, political, environmental, and social trends that affect the organization. Understands near-term and long-range plans and determines how to best be positioned to be an effective advocate for the Service's mission for the public in government and the environmental community.

Importance

Successful organizations look beyond their organizational boundaries as part of the strategic planning and management process. They understand the internal and external environments they work within and develop strategies accordingly. It is a systems oriented approach to thinking and to strategy that is essential to collaboration, public service and complex problem solving in the USFWS.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Senior Leaders must monitor and analyze national and international environmental, social, political, technological, and economic trends. They synthesize and apply the information to optimize performance, organize resources, and address threats to the Service's mission. They understand the increasing interdependence of federal, state, local agencies, private entities, NGOs, and international organizations. They identify information and best practices to develop, adopt and implement policies and procedures to improve performance. Senior leaders recognize the possible impact of national and international events, issues and crises on the Service's mission; assess the organization's capability to meet current and future requirements; and develop organizational plans to meet the requirements. They must recognize and respect the perspective of others and they must be politically adept and build alliances among key stakeholders and use a systems approach to organizations (including the Congress) that will be involved in achieving their strategic goals.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Understands the Federal Government, the Department, the Service, the relevant laws, regulations, policies and procedures that affect the organization, and the systems within the agency including its overall mission and role, and the major functions, programs, and processes within the Service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes the possible impact of international events and global issues of environment and economy on U.S. society, the Government, and the agency. • Identifies the implications of political, environmental, economic and social changes. • Identifies the context for policy implementation based on external factors. • Recognizes the increasing interdependence of federal, non-federal, public, NGO, and international organizations and accounts for the relevant organizations in the development of plans and policies. • Works with stakeholders, partners, and related organizations to coordinate policy decisions, address problems and share knowledge and ensures Agency and employee participation in such networks. • Builds mission related capacity across programs and agencies, with NGOs, and international organizations to address problems effectively--in a sustained, respectful, and articulated manner rather than stove piped fashion. • Is politically adroit in addressing, informing, and negotiating buy-in from all key stakeholders.
<p>Scans the domestic and international political, social, technological, economic and demographic environments to identify trends that may affect their organization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors political, economic and social trends that may affect the organization. • Uses participative and empowering collective inquiry, bringing together full representation of key stakeholders in planning and decision discussions. • Utilizes knowledge systems to gather current, accurate information and relevant perspectives. • Identifies stakeholders, including Congress, which will be involved in achieving organizational, Service, and Departmental goals and incorporates their interests into strategic planning. • Promotes an informed, active and dynamic customer focus throughout the organization that is proactive, widely participative, and interactive. • Solicits, understands, and anticipates the changing needs and expectations of stakeholders and remains alert to opportunities to serve constituents better.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Bases plans, decisions, and strategies on an understanding of how the internal and external environments influence and are influenced by these decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops, communicates and implements an organizational strategy that is based on accurate, current information which reflects a holistic understanding of the relevant issues and those affected by them. • Considers external issues affecting the organization when making program decisions. • Anticipates the broader consequences of one's actions to include second order effects and beyond. • Adapts strategic responses and tactics to fit fluid circumstances. • Translates Congressional and other stakeholder mandates into effective strategies and achievable programs of action. • Understands functional boundaries as arbitrary definitions that can outlive their usefulness and works to transcend those boundaries. • Crafts responsive, sustainable policy through networks, critical stakeholder groups and other outside constituencies. • Shifts strategies and tactics as resources and priorities change. • Organizes resources and activities to focus on long-term problems and opportunities. • Influences the decision making processes so that policies, programs and other developments are informed, customer driven, and considered within the broad political framework. • Evaluates employee and organizational skills and strengths to identify organizational capability to meet current and future requirements. • Develops integrated solutions crossing traditional boundaries, fostering consistency and cooperation.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Establishes a learning organization which uses partnering, knowledge management, benchmarking, and other means of soliciting, monitoring and organizing diverse insights in order to respond quickly and well to external changes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researches, identifies, adopts, and implements best practices to increase organizational effectiveness. • Establishes systems to share information and insights to build strategic awareness throughout the organization. • Encourages communities of practice to include external organizations and individuals. • Develops systems to gather and share information broadly so that the organization is informed, recognizes success, shares feedback, and remains alert to change and opportunity. • Works within a broad network to understand interrelated issues and work towards common goals and to learn from common experience. • Identifies the underlying needs of critical stakeholders, beyond the obvious or those expressed initially by the stakeholders themselves. • Approaches problems from multiple perspectives. • Routinely exchanges information with stakeholders and customers. • Seeks opportunities to share information across functional boundaries.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Senior Leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Seek out a detail in External Affairs, WO, CITES or International Affairs in the Service.
- Explore opportunities for cross program/agency/NGO details.
- Volunteer to work on cross program and multi-agency projects.
- Perform details at complex stations with multi-disciplinary issues involving multiple stakeholders.
- Serve on external committees as opportunities arise.
- Consider details from WO to the field or field to WO to learn the perspective of each other.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Observe and conduct interviews with those who do well in external awareness.
- Correspond with leaders who exhibit external awareness and/or work in that capacity.
- Develop external relationships/networks with other organizations such as National Geographic, Wildlife Conservation Society, etc.
- Read business books, national newspapers, Federal News, Govt. Executive, political/legislative publications to broaden your perspective.
- Subscribe to Government Executive magazine and appropriate online periodicals.
- Keep abreast of legislation, policies, political trends and climate.
- Shadow an AD/RD in the Service.
- Obtain membership in an organization and attend their meetings such as your local Chamber of Commerce, NGO, Convention and Visitor's Bureau or [Toastmasters](#) club.

Training

- Take other training opportunities offered by the Division of Education Outreach at NCTC such as [Working with the News Media](#) OUT8181, Congressional Operations Seminar, [Congress and the Field Office](#) OUT8191, [Conservation Partnerships in Practice](#) OUT8118.
- Take training in ethics and values.

INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATING (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS AND COMMUNICATION)

Definition

Persuades others; builds consensus through collaboration; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates “win-win” situations; maximizes use of resources within applicable regulatory limits.

Importance

The essence of successful leadership is embodied in the paired competency of influencing and negotiating which are integral to achieving individual, team, workgroup, and organizational performance at levels beyond those met merely through regulation, compliance, and enforcement. Individuals at all levels with influence skills that include interpersonal skills, facile oral and written communication skills, empathic sensitivity, and technical credibility, exhibit personal authority that is not dependent solely on formal authority. This personal authority enables them to lead change in good times or in times of turmoil. The ability to negotiate facilitates dialog, and thus enhances one’s ability to gain cooperation, to develop optimal solutions, to work better with others who may be seen as “difficult,” and to resolve issues that impede organizational or personal success. Through these tools, senior leaders can greatly enhance their effectiveness by building and working through a variety of innovative partnerships.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Senior Leaders know and use diverse methods to persuade and influence others to achieve organizational results and to adopt change. They know and communicate internal and external factors and interdependencies that have an impact on policy setting and the work of the organization. Senior Leaders develop effective business cases for change and new initiatives and utilize a variety of communication approaches and technology (email, radio, television, video conferencing, etc.) to present, repeat and reinforce the message. They collaborate and negotiate with external stakeholders, staff, other managers, and superiors to develop lasting agreements that involve broad components of the organization and build an environment (physical, virtual and relational) designed to positively influence all stakeholders to contribute their best.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses oral and written communication and non-verbal skills to influence behaviors or perceptions constructively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively shapes the debate and influences how an issue and potential solutions are perceived by others. • Builds support for a shared vision using facts, reason and persuasion. • Seeks face-to-face communication. • Knows and communicates internal and external factors and interdependencies that have an impact on policy setting and the work of the organization. • Inspires trust and commitment among employees and stakeholders by being honestly engaged, personable, visible and recognizable. • Adapts arguments and presentations to the specific interests of the audience. • Distills the vision and new ideas into focused messages that can inspire and guide others in times of change. • Creates a sense of energy and importance around change and motivates employees to join the change effort. • Develops and communicates effective business cases for change and new initiatives that transcend current practices. • Helps all stakeholders understand the Service's priorities and can translate these into organizational plans and actions. • Selects and uses a variety of media with an understanding of which media will best communicate or reinforce the message.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Builds and maintains strong relationships based on confidence and trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds and strengthens enduring bases of support. • Gains and develops rapport with higher-level leadership by demonstrating competence, courage, honesty and respect. • Seeks to understand the interests of stakeholders. • Communicates with customers, employees and other key stakeholders with openness and transparency. • Engages broadly in consultation that is participatory and empowering. • Understands the dynamics between elected officials and public servants and uses this knowledge strategically and with tact to remove obstacles to understanding and mission accomplishment. • Recognizes the role of indirect influence and understands how secondary and tertiary relationships may help or hinder the impact of their message. • Builds, promotes and uses coalitions and partnerships. • Identifies power bases and influences them appropriately to guide events and outcomes. • Involves potential opponents in discussions to provide accurate information, build consensus, broaden access to other groups, and/or develop collaborative solutions.
Manages the internal environment to achieve desired behaviors and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates evolving conditions upward and makes their implications for the health of the organization clear. • Leads collaboratively to gain buy-in and commitment from employees and stakeholders. • Empowers others to get things done. • Uses legitimate authority to achieve compliance when other methods of influence are unsuccessful. • Creates a climate that broadly encourages employees to take new or innovative approaches, providing them a safety net in case of “responsible” failure, and treating them as useful lessons. • Fosters a climate that allows subordinates to challenge ideas or processes and develop alternative approaches. • Develops subordinates to enable delegated decision making authority. • Keeps internal stakeholders informed of progress towards goals and sustains support and motivation.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Implements the theory and practice of negotiation; especially to find common ground and win-win solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads complex and/or contentious multi-party negotiations on issues that may have impact on Regional or program level issues or policies. • Develops and communicates negotiating strategies that recognize the needs and perceptions of key stakeholders, balance and weigh competing interests effectively, and take into account Regional, Program, and/or Service level implications of successful or non-successful negotiations. • Leads negotiating teams and provides opportunities for less experienced members of the team to have substantial roles to build negotiating capacity in the organization. • Brings expertise into the negotiating process (i.e., facilitator, subject matter experts, legal experts, etc.) when required to achieve outcomes beneficial to the Service. • Employs a full range of negotiation techniques from win-win to no deal with win-win as the preferred outcome. • Remains objective. • Uses <u>interests</u> instead of <u>positions</u> to evaluate strategies and solutions. • Understands and uses active listening, effective verbal communication, personal integrity, flexibility, emotional control, and analysis and evaluation skills in negotiations.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Senior Leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Work on joint labor-management groups to influence outcomes and effectively contribute to collective bargaining agreement process.
- Serve on a conflict resolution team.
- Audit a multi-party negotiation.
- Serve on a multi-program/agency project team.
- Volunteer to lead a public meeting/hearing.
- Detail to the solicitors office, Washington, or Capitol Hill.
- Detail to WO Budget office during budget formulation and passback.
- Participate on a team developing Service or Departmental policy.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Negotiate effectively for services and/or equipment with external sources.
- Interview/shadow experienced negotiators.
- Volunteer to shadow an ARD.
- Read the book “Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher and William Ury and “Getting Past No, Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation” by William Ury.
- Follow the progress of a state or Federal legislative proposal.
- Reflect on whether self development in interpersonal skills is warranted.

Training

- Consider attending team/group dynamics training at NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Consider attending the following NCTC courses; Interest-Based Negotiations OUT8121, Applying Collaboration to Environmental Issues, and [Effective Facilitation](#) LED5122.

PARTNERING (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS & COMMUNICATIONS)

Definition

Develops networks and builds alliances, engages in cross-functional activities, collaborates across boundaries, and finds common ground with a widening range of stakeholders. Utilizes contacts to build and strengthen internal support bases.

Importance

Collaboration is a critical dimension of modern leadership in public service today. Highly effective government today requires partnerships, coalitions, and other collaborative, participative approaches. Leaders must be ready to seek out and work with others to make interdependent decisions and implement solutions based on an understanding of the issues and resources that partnering with others brings. The Service must move away from being rule-based and be guided by principles and outcomes. This will require leaders who involve others, manage change, and communicate an overarching mission and common purpose. Partnering provides the opportunity to build an effective community between the Service and its stakeholders, reduce or avoid duplications, establish a team culture, and deliver superior service.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Senior Leaders have primary responsibility for fostering a culture that understands the organization's goals and is willing to work collaboratively towards the achievement of those goals. They establish communications processes within the organization to enable greater recognition of common issues. They seek out and initiate opportunities to achieve organizational goals through partnering and collaboration, utilizing knowledge management and networking systems while contributing to the establishment and implementation of a management structure that supports partnerships. Senior Leaders emphasize developmental opportunities for staff to enable them to identify, develop, and employ a broad range of processes and tools. They foster benchmarking as a means of addressing continual improvement; explore collaborative possibilities that are innovative in type and scope; network with a wide range of stakeholders to identify and pursue alliances; and ensure evaluation processes measure the success of partnership efforts.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Facilitates the establishment and health of a partnering culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters a culture that understands goals in the broader context, and which works collaboratively towards the achievement of those goals. • Minimizes stove-piping and other sources of disruptive competition among work groups. • Designs and implements knowledge management and networking systems both within the organization and among relevant discipline and managerial networks. • Emphasizes developmental opportunities for staff which enable them to broaden their abilities to seek out, develop and employ a broad range of processes and tools. • Establishes communications processes within the organization which enable greater recognition of common issues, and which foster the organization's ability to address these collaboratively. • Builds trust within and across partnerships. • Treats partners fairly. • Helps others focus on ideas, processes, interests and outcomes instead of personalities and positions to minimize conflict and its inherent win/lose focus. • Maintains agreed upon confidentiality.
Creates and communicates strategic opportunities to partner with others towards the achievement of common goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops integrated, pragmatic, process solutions which cross traditional department boundaries and which foster agency-wide and "enterprise-wide" consistency and cooperation. • Establishes collaborative partnerships to enhance organizational capacity to reach mission goals. • Strategically plans to advance seamless and inter-departmental approaches to services and products. • Establishes partnerships to maximize resource availability and organizational performance. • Explores collaborative possibilities that are innovative in type and scope. • Manages change strategically through many others. • Promotes cooperation across functions/departments to achieve objectives. • Is alert to opportunities to maximize resources, improve services, and avoid unnecessary duplication through collaborative and partnership efforts.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Manages existing partnerships; monitoring achievements and progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the establishment and implementation of a management structure for partnerships, including structures and accountability across the partnership itself, as well as to regulate the relationship between the partnership and the home agency. • Understands, practices and promotes virtual teamwork and the effective use of social networks. • Defines clearly and comprehensively partners' roles and responsibilities, purpose, expected outputs, and realistic performance measures. • Monitors partnerships for value added and analyses successes and failures in order to build on lessons learned. • Establishes procedural ground rules regarding how decisions will be made, how information will be distributed, and the role of representatives. • Contributes resources equitably. • Ensures rigorous evaluation processes to measure the success of partnership efforts by comparing results with expectations and analyses how partnerships can be improved. • Ensures that all those affected by the work of the partnership are involved. • Understands and uses formal, written agreements to outline expectations among the partners. • Contributes real resources to the collaborative effort. • Uses tools that clearly communicate the project status and needs among all partners and which reach all key decision makers. • Adopts a common set of standards for seamless systems, data and business process integration. • Finds flexibility within the rules to support innovative collaborative partnerships within and outside of the agency.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Senior Leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Lead multi-agency teams and cross-program activities.
- Lead a national scale committee/project.
- Develop a cross-program Regional level policy.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Shadow another Service leader to see how they find and develop their partnership efforts.
- Develop a grant proposal for an innovative partnership effort.
- Identify a resource issue and the people who have a stake in it, and work to develop that partnership.
- Identify a successful partnership and learn from their approach and the participants.
- Learn about other agencies/programs by doing some individual research to see if there are partnering opportunities.
- Learn about the different type of funding mechanisms/partnership agreements available to you.
- Read books on team leadership and establishing partnerships.
- Shadow someone who is considered a partnership champion.
- Identify a resource issue and the stakeholders to see if partnership opportunities exist for the Service.
- Learn about different financial agreements available for funding partnerships.
- Gain experience writing effective project proposals involving multiple partners.

Training

- Apply to the Service's [Advanced Leadership Development Program \(ALDP\)](#).
- Learn how to write a grant proposal by attending [Grant Writing in Conservation](#) OUT8116.

- Consider partnership courses at NCTC such as Building Partnerships Between Gateway Communities and Public Lands (ITV Workshop) and [Conservation Partnerships](#) OUT8110.
- Attend training on team leadership/team building from NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Attend training on interpersonal relationships and communication at NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Attend training on political savvy.

STRATEGIC THINKING (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Formulates effective strategies consistent with the mission, vision and priorities of the Service in the global environment. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities while anticipating potential threats or opportunities.

Importance

Strategic Thinking is the conceptual process that underlies two of the elements most critical for success in any organization—strategic planning and strategic management. It is the apex of managerial and executive thinking and is simultaneously considered both the most difficult and most important challenge for any public or private organization and its leaders. It is imperative that the senior leadership of the Service continually scan the environment and engage in strategic thinking to develop a compelling strategy for the organization, and motivate all within the organization to think strategically, aligning plans and policies to support and promote the Service and organizational mission, vision and priorities.

How do Senior Leaders (GS-13/14) Demonstrate This Competency?

Senior Leaders assist in long-range planning to enhance organizational performance and survival, involving internal stakeholders in the planning process for the organizational unit. They employ systems thinking, collaboration and an integrated approach to problem solving and develop, align and communicate unit strategies to accomplish the organization's goals. Senior Leaders prioritize outcomes and prepare unit goals including staffing and resource requirements. They establish partnerships to maximize resource availability, organizational performance, and share best practices. They educate and support supervisors' understanding and success in the achievement of plans, recognize the system-wide outcomes of program implementation, and accept and support changing strategy, structure and staffing as needed to support organizational realities.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Utilizes an understanding of the organization, its mission, its customers and its evolving environmental realities to develop strategies to accomplish organizational goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes beyond assumptions/“givens” in assessing issues and changing circumstances. • Seeks, identifies and accounts for perspectives and issues outside of their program, the Service and/or the Federal government in developing organizational strategies. • Enhances their own and organizational knowledge of the broad environmental context of their work and mission. • Transcends functional and organizational boundaries to enhance long-term performance, efficiency, and sustainability. • Communicates the customer focus throughout the organization.
Plans and works towards long-term success, affordability and sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employs systems thinking and other analytical forecasting tools to assess risk and prioritize among options, programs and initiatives. • Builds long-term strategic plans with specific goals, strategic objectives, actions, and performance measures that are driven by mission requirements. • Implements a human capital management system that hires, develops and trains the right people to achieve long-term strategies. • Leads development of knowledge management systems to facilitate knowledge creation, sharing, and reuse. • Uses a metrics based approach to assess strategy effectiveness and identify proactive measures to adapt organizational initiatives to overcome obstacles. • Seeks long-term cost-reduction or efficiency opportunities that do not compromise responsiveness and quality. • Prepares organizational unit goals including staffing and resource requirements that are in alignment with long term goals. • Ensures employees have adequate training in analytical processes necessary to forecast long-term outcomes and manage risk.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Aligns and integrates efforts, core processes, activities, and resources with the Service's mission, long term strategies and priorities to maximize effectiveness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans the implementation and management of the organization's strategic plan. • Communicates the interrelationships within the Service and organizational missions and forges connections amongst programs and work units. • Establishes partnerships to maximize resource availability and organizational performance. • Develops integrated, pragmatic, process-oriented solutions that cross traditional boundaries and foster consistency and cooperation across those boundaries. • Builds consensus on long-term plans and strategy with internal and external stakeholders. • Plans for and invests in training and other developmental activities for self and others that enhance the abilities of the organization to meet strategic goals. • Involves internal and external stakeholders in the planning process which translates the overall strategic plan into specific goals and actions for the organization.
<p>Realigns resources, processes and approaches swiftly and proactively to account for the evolving realities of global, environmental technological, and workforce change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains alert to opportunities to enhance organizational effectiveness and acts, even if some risk is involved. • Establishes mechanisms for the exchange of ideas and information. • Promotes organizational involvement in continuous improvement by establishing mechanisms that provide continuing feedback on processes and services. • Empowers informed decision makers on all levels to make effective, timely decisions. • Realigns processes and resources to accommodate changes in the organization's strategic plan.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Establishes and values the importance of objectives and performance measures which help achieve Service goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and implements budget and performance integration strategies. • Builds support for organizational change and restructures assets to align with identified priorities and to improve organizational effectiveness. • Develops and uses criteria for determining the optimal use of available resources based on mission priorities. • Implements employee performance management systems to align employee performance with the strategic plan and performance targets. • Matches rewards for performance with successful achievement of strategic goals.
<p>Communicates Service and organizational strategy to all stakeholders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with internal and external stakeholders to gain support for identified changes and leverages their support with other affected or interested parties. • Describes and clearly communicates the urgency and importance of the organization's strategy and performance objectives throughout the organization and to external stakeholders. • Communicates how the organization's and employees' work fits into the bigger picture. • Develops, communicates, and implements effective change strategies. • Informs the organization and employees of progress towards goals on a routine basis and sustains employee motivation to achieve the goals.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Senior Leader (GS-13/14) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Consider detail assignments at a higher level than you currently occupy.
- Consider a detail in the WO Budget Office during budget planning times.
- Volunteer to be an officer in a community group.
- Volunteer to work on a programmatic strategic plan.
- Consider a detail in a WO or Regional program planning office.
- Consider a detail in Congressional Legislative Affairs.
- Consider a detail in DOI or another federal bureau.

Supporting Developmental Activities

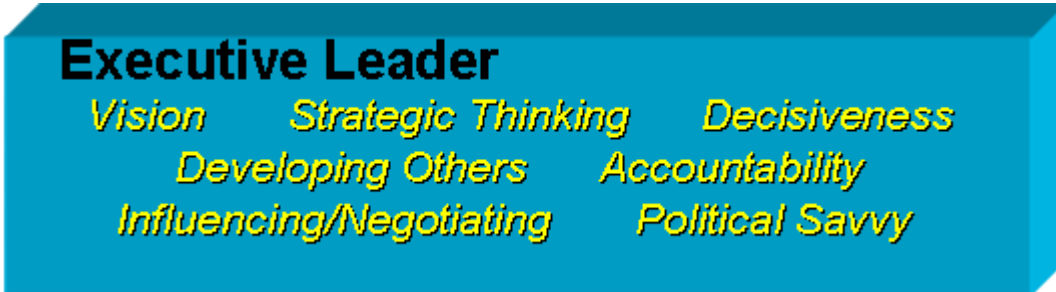
Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Interview or shadow a member of the Service or Department Directorate or a leader in another bureau.
- Read books to expand your knowledge base.
- Reflect on whether you have a broad enough perspective to pull together varying elements into a coherent strategic view.
- Are you curious? If not, why not?
- Read numerous strategic case studies in business publications and journals.
- Reflect on whether you are delegating enough day-to-day activities to others so that you could have more quality time to think strategically.
- Reflect on how your short term strategic plan affects the long term plan.

Training

- Apply for the [Advanced Leadership Development Plan](#) (ALDP).
- Take training on structured decision making and critical thinking/writing courses offered by NCTC.
- Take college courses on strategic management.
- Consider the [Center for Creative Leadership](#)'s course "Developing the Strategic Leader."

USFWS Mission Critical Executive Leader Competencies



ACCOUNTABILITY (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Assures that effective controls are both developed and maintained to ensure the integrity of the organization. Holds their self and others accountable for rules and responsibilities and can be relied upon to ensure that projects within their area of specific responsibility are completed in a timely manner and within budget. Monitors and evaluates plans while focusing on results and measuring attainment of outcomes.

Importance

Accountability application ranges from individual responsibility for setting and meeting high standards for personal performance to the very definition of government workers as stewards of the commonwealth. It is the vehicle through which value is created for the public dollar, and public services are improved. The accountable individual remains in touch with the changing needs of those who are served, and earns their ongoing trust. Accountability is a mark of a mature worker and is dependent on each individual being held responsible for achieving agreed upon outcomes. It is essential to a well-functioning organization that each individual proactively take the responsibility to follow work through to completion, to provide both quality products/services and quality customer service, while meeting commitments in a timely manner and within budget. Government workers must also hold themselves accountable for protecting the privacy of employees, customers and members of the public. The leader is also accountable for the results of their team.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

Since organizational success is predicated on all employees being held accountable for achieving agreed upon outcomes, executives must establish a positive performance culture throughout the organization and develop and maintain a strategic framework for accomplishing the tasks of the organization. They oversee the establishment, development, promulgation, monitoring, maintenance, and enforcement of an organization-wide performance management system. They ensure that organizational work priorities, performance standards, return on investment and time expended are consistent with the overall strategic direction of the organization. Executives work broadly with stakeholders to create a shared vision which balances and reconciles interests. They make sound decisions based on research, benchmarking, and evidence and never allow personal advantage or political pressure to dictate actions or decisions that work against the welfare of the nation.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Serves as a steward of the common good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generates and implements sound strategies to accomplish the goals of the Service. • Does not allow personal advantage or political pressure to dictate actions or decisions. • Ensures that subordinates have the tools and resources necessary to accomplish the Service mission. • Develops strategic plans to allocate resources in a way designed to achieve the highest goals of the Service. • Operates within established policies, regulations and laws. • Promotes innovation, efficiency and greater effectiveness of programs through the use of appropriate business tools. • Implements HR strategies that result in the hiring and development of high quality staff whose skills match the changing needs of the organization. • Makes compelling business cases for programs. • Shares resources with other public and private organizations when beneficial to the Service's mission.
Takes responsibility for personal performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursues excellence diligently. • Explains performance shortfalls to staff and stakeholders. • Seeks feedback regarding performance. • Seeks self-development opportunities.
Meets or exceeds standards of excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a positive performance culture throughout the organization. • Understands and uses benchmarking and other investigatory processes to identify and implement best practices. • Ensures that employee performance plans focus on accountability for results.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Develops policy and builds, evaluates, and reforms programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works with stakeholders to create a shared vision, balancing and reconciling various interests to achieve greater effectiveness and efficiency. • Consults and utilizes research and experts relevant to the Service mission. • Takes a holistic view of the agency mission, looking beyond institutional boundaries. • Carries out review and assessment of programs to ensure that they remain relevant, appropriate and effective. • Develops and utilizes information systems and processes necessary to support ongoing review, evaluation and performance of programs. • Uses lessons learned to make program improvements or to end failing programs. • Takes the initiative to share insights, information, effective program models and evaluation results with others. • Distinguishes clearly between failure of a policy or program itself vs. operational failures due to implementation and acts accordingly.
Conscientiously assesses and manages risk.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes and supports risks that are ethical, legal, reasoned and commensurate with potential gain. • Establishes and communicates clear guidelines for others regarding risk.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Seek an assignment as the leader/manager in charge of an organization with primary responsibility for managing its budget, people, and achieving its mission.
- Work on gaining substantive experience on projects or initiatives that are national in scope and involve multiple stakeholders.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments:

- Apply for a detail as a field project leader.
- Lead a team in conducting a performance review of another organization.
- Apply for a detail to a performance consulting firm or institution.
- Gain experience in a Planning and Performance shop, perhaps in private industry.
- Gain experience in a Public Affairs position in a headquarters office.
- Gain experience with State, tribal and non-governmental conservation oriented organizations.
- Do not discount gaining experience with private industry organizations and trade associations involved in natural resource use such as:
 - Cattlemen' Association
 - Forest products industry
 - National Association of Home Builders
 - Energy cooperatives
- Apply for a detail at Departmental and/or other Federal departments that are prominently involved in Service issues, such as Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers, USGS, Department of Agriculture, Office of Management Budget, CEQ, NOAA Fisheries, or EPA.

Training

- Volunteer to be a coach in the Service's [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (ALDP).

- Apply to attend senior grade training opportunities:
 - [The Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) of the Office of Personnel Management
 - [Kennedy School of Government](#)
 - [The Brookings Institution](#)
 - [Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program](#)

- Take executive or graduate level training courses in:
 - Systems Thinking
 - Strategic Issue Analysis and Formulation
 - Managing Complex Systems Change
 - Project Management
 - Critical Path Analysis
 - Strategic Planning 101 and greater
 - Public Relations
 - Communications 101 and greater
 - Risk Management
 - Organizational Effectiveness

DECISIVENESS (ECQ - RESULTS DRIVEN)

Definition

Exercises good judgment by making sound and well-informed decisions; perceives the impact and implications of decisions; makes effective and timely decisions, even when data are limited or solutions produce unpleasant consequences; is proactive and achievement oriented.

Importance

As the pace, degree, and “unpredictability” of change escalate, sound, well-informed decisions that are made in a timely manner (often with incomplete data) and with a commitment to action are essential for satisfactory job performance at every level of the organization. Note that decisiveness reflects the skills essential to problem solving together with a resoluteness of character and a commitment to action, unless reliable and credible information arises that requires reevaluation of the decision.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

Executives demonstrate decisiveness by identifying, developing and implementing policies and procedures that encourage decision-making and action orientation throughout the organization. They must balance analysis with action. They must identify and act promptly upon opportunities and threats to the organization while allocating resources necessary to achieve the organization’s mission/goals. They evaluate the potential and actual impact of decisions on subordinate managers, staff members, and external stakeholders. Executives must analyze situations and prepare scenarios for crisis situations that may occur within their sphere of influence to be able to lead decisively regardless of circumstances. To prepare themselves for crucial decisions, they must have the habit of reflecting on past actions and must lead an organization which gathers and analyses lessons learned. Executive leaders must balance courage and wisdom.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Is action oriented and makes timely decisions that keep projects moving towards completion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commits the organization to a course of action and provides the resources to accomplish it. • Thinks and acts quickly and logically even when there are no clear instructions or if the agreed upon plan falls apart. • Formulates objectives and strategies under pressure or in complex situations. • Thinks and acts quickly and effectively in crisis situations when established plans prove insufficient, when the unexpected occurs, and when core values are threatened. • Establishes and empowers trained “action teams” that can respond decisively to crisis situations.
Possesses self awareness and supportable confidence in one’s knowledge, abilities and experience to form the basis for good decisions and actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly condenses research and evidence into realistic implementation and strategy. • Demonstrates courage when making difficult decisions. • Responds flexibly when planned actions don’t work. • Consistently chooses process(es) most likely to achieve objectives. • Makes decisions to resolve stale-mates in time sensitive situations. • Is reflective in analyzing outcomes of action and learning from experience.
Understands the nature of risk and is willing to take reasonable and ethical risks when the need for action outweighs waiting for more complete information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes reasoned, educated, and informed risks to achieve agency/organization goals. • Develops and implements contingency plans as necessary. • Empowers others to take risks, supports them when things go wrong and encourages them to learn from setbacks and failures. • Seeks and implements creative solutions to accomplish the mission.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses a range of analytical and intuitive approaches to analyze problems, recognize complex patterns and patterns that are not obviously related, trace implications of decisions, and perceive the impact of various courses of action, taking corrective action where required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts for underlying issues and implications when making decisions. • Anticipates the need for action, the consequences of acting (or not acting), and the potential problems or opportunities. • Adapts his/her management approach and analysis to make decisions or solve problems based on situational needs. • Takes direct and appropriate action when employee performance is unsatisfactory and/or behavior is inappropriate. • Asks the right questions, at the right time, in order to make an informed decision.
<p>Holds self accountable. Assumes responsibility for results of decisions even if unpopular or unsuccessful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements policies and procedures that encourage decision-making and action-orientation. • Accepts responsibility for the consequences of own decisions. • Assumes responsibility for risks taken and actions pursued throughout the organization that are consistent with organization policies and procedures. • Responds appropriately to questions and challenges about a decision by articulating the rationale for the decision.
<p>Has broad understanding of the organization, its mission, goals and processes that enables one to establish parameters for decisions, to muster resources for action, and to identify and remove obstacles to needed action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has strategic orientation. • Keeps alert to opportunities to enhance organizational effectiveness and acts upon these, even if some risk is involved. • Takes action on both short-term and future opportunities and problems. • Utilizes resources from across the organization to gather data and extract pertinent information. • Identifies and implements actions that produce significant results and that are consistent with the agency's priorities and mission. • Removes obstacles and overcomes resistance in order to achieve objectives. • Shares information and empowers subordinates to make decisions.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Understands the importance of influence and communication in obtaining the commitment of others to decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presents key information regarding decisions in accessible ways to full range of stakeholders.• Confirms others' understanding of issues, options and actions.• Influences others using formal and informal processes to accomplish organizational goals.• Develops and implements strategic communications plans to include effectively working with the media.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Seek a detail or assignment where a decision needs to be made between competing priorities, and develop a plan to accomplish it.
- Consider a detail at the Department level to gain insight into how decisions are made at the Secretary level, how the decisions are communicated to Bureaus, and what the impact decisions have on the organization.
- Seek a Project leader assignment within the Service.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments:

- Engage in a shadow assignment with a designated mentor.
- Participate in executive level decision making sessions.
- While chairing or leading a committee, gain experience communicating an unpopular decision and how the decision will be carried out.
- Experiment with creative and “risky” solutions in your own program.
- Seek out a coach or other role model for advice.
- Meet with local political, NGOs, community and professional groups to build your executive network.
- Read the book “Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher and William Ury and “Getting Past No, Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation” by William Ury.
- Reflect on whether you state as facts things that are really biases, opinions or assumptions.
- Study other decision makers such as Bill Gates and Winston Churchill. Pay attention to how they made decisions in their life and careers. Consider what things they did that you could apply to yourself.
- Reflect on whether you thoroughly define the problem and do enough analysis before making a decision.

Training

- Seek training in dealing with difficult people and difficult conversations.
- Take training on documenting/taking adverse personnel actions.
- Consider whether facilitation training would help you lead to better decisions.
- Take training on goal setting and establishing priorities.
- Take Executive or graduate level training courses in:
 - Project Management
 - Decision making
 - Leadership
 - Communications
 - Leadership Assessment including decision making

DEVELOPING OTHERS (ECQ - LEADING PEOPLE)

Definition

Develops the ability of others to perform and contribute to the organization by providing ongoing feedback and by providing opportunities to learn through formal and informal methods.

Importance

Employees play a critical role in the success and strategic agility of the Service. People will only achieve what they are truly capable of when they are supported by ongoing development initiatives, an organizational culture of learning and idea exchange, and leadership that takes the initiative to help others by providing direction, support, and a positive role model. Developing others is the internal organizational expression of service motivation.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

The executive leader invests in employee development and incorporates it into their budgeting, planning, and operational practices. The executive leader creates and supports an environment and processes that facilitate learning, networking, and broad knowledge-sharing. They ensure the resources are available to develop the Service's employees. They set high expectations for learning and celebrate these achievements. It is essential that executive leaders communicate the importance of learning as part of the organizational strategy for success. They ensure that the resources are available to train managers and supervisors in coaching, enabling them to provide meaningful, and constructive, forward focused feedback. They hold managers and supervisors accountable for the wise management and investment in their employees. Employee development is a top priority. Executive leaders model the values of the organization and of government service.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Establishes, implements and evaluates strategic developmental plans that enhance the capacity of employees to meet the changing demands of the future.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through a collaborative effort with supervisors and staff, establishes a “developmental” plan for their organization that sets specific developmental objectives and opportunities that are directly linked to organizational results. • Develops a strategic approach that establishes priorities and leverages investments in training and development to achieving agency results. • Identifies mission-critical knowledge, skills and competencies for all levels and establishes objectives and strategies for achieving them. • Develops and implements strategic workforce development plans. • Reviews and updates training goals and processes in light of strategic and organizational changes. • Establishes cross programmatic, inter-agency, inter-governmental, private sector and international developmental efforts.
<p>Supports an organizational culture that promotes continuous learning and the free exchange of ideas and opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates and models the principle of life-long learning and fosters a learning culture that provides opportunities for continuous development of employees. • Personally participates in developmental activities, not only for their own growth objectives, but also as a reaffirming sign of their commitment to developing others. • Promotes a culture that encourages employees to be open, tolerant, and trusting. • Places a priority on employee developmental activities and supports them through the allocation of resources (budget and time). • Encourages staff to share recent professional experiences in a wide variety of forums. • Ensures wide distribution of information on developmental opportunities within their organization and in others as a means of identifying cross-program developmental opportunities.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Coaches others, using effective goal-defining feedback, and follow-through approaches to build others' confidence, commitment, skills and knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides feedback to the employee through performance evaluations.• Utilizes performance feedback and other assessment tools to identify strengths and developmental needs.• Works with employees to develop follow-through strategies to ensure that what is learned in training and other developmental initiatives is shared and translated into work activity and strategic planning.• Provides performance management and coaching tools to managers and supervisors for use with their employees.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Seek an assignment or extended detail in a supervisory position with responsibility for the development of subordinates and/or significant responsibilities for strategic leadership succession or workforce planning.
- Seek an assignment or extended detail at NCTC or other training organization.
- Through a collaborative effort with staff and leadership, develop and implement a significant development or mentoring program within the scope of responsibilities.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Allow others to shadow you on a recurring basis and work with employees to develop a greater understanding of what they've learned.
- Serve as an instructor/teacher at NCTC or other training facility/organization.
- Consider an assignment or extended detail at NCTC or other training organization.
- Lead significant workforce planning activities within the organization to include employee/leadership development planning.
- Find your own mentor or coach in or outside of the organization, and serve as a mentor for others.
- Focus effort and time on employees who need guidance and support from their leader.
- Subscribe to newsletters about successful organizations and business practices, such as Gallup.
- Actively participate in organizational "retreats" and volunteer to organize one.
- Conduct workshops/brown bag lunches – share your knowledge with others.
- Read books to expand your knowledge base.
- Develop good performance plans for all of your employees with measurable criteria.

- Become more knowledgeable about giving constructive feedback to others. Establish a buddy system so people can get continuing feedback.
- Give the people under your level the opportunity to have assignments outside of their functional area.
- Reflect on whether you are equitable in how challenging work assignments are parceled out in your organization.
- Facilitate teambuilding training for your work group.
- Set aside quality time to spend discussing your employees goals and how they align with organizational goals.
- Volunteer to serve as a formal or informal mentor to a Service employee.
- Be a coach/leader for a community youth group (sports team coach, scout leader, church group leader, etc.)

Training

- Attend a Coaching or Mentoring Course such as "[Coaching for Effective Performance](#)" LED6179 or courses offered by an outside provider, such as the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) or Coach U.
- Apply to be a coach in the FWS [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (ALDP) (GS-15 level employees only).
- Consider coaching for the NCTC [Stepping Up to Leadership](#) (SUTL) LED6072 program.
- Serve as a program advisor during the Service's [Project Leader Academy](#) LED6201.
- Attend performance management training offered by DOIU, NCTC or other provider.
- Attend a leadership development program such as the [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (for GS 13/14's) or National Conservation Leadership Institute or courses offered by outside providers.

INFLUENCING AND NEGOTIATING (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS AND COMMUNICATION)

Definition

Persuades others; builds consensus through give and take; gains cooperation from others to obtain information and accomplish goals; facilitates “win-win” situations; maximizes use of resources within applicable regulatory limits.

Importance

The essence of successful leadership is embodied in the paired competency of influencing and negotiating which are integral to achieving individual, team, workgroup, and organizational performance at levels beyond those met merely through regulation, compliance, and enforcement. Individuals at all levels with influence skills that include interpersonal skills, facile oral and written communication skills, empathic sensitivity, and technical credibility, exhibit personal authority that is not dependent solely on formal authority. This personal authority enables them to lead change in good times or in times of turmoil. The ability to negotiate facilitates dialog, and thus enhances one’s ability to gain cooperation, to develop optimal solutions, to work better with others who may be seen as “difficult,” and to resolve issues that impede organizational or personal success. Through the use of these tools, executive leaders can greatly enhance their effectiveness by building and working through a variety of innovative partnerships.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

The Federal Executive must influence key subordinate managers to act as change agents on behalf of key initiatives; communicate persuasively with factual, well-written support materials to provide a compelling vision; and effectively communicate with Congressional representatives and staffers to secure funding and build support for the Agency’s work. Executives are able to “argue” effectively for (or against) change as appropriate; use media advocacy effectively to frame the way an issue is viewed; and establish an overall environment that influences individuals and groups toward organizational goals. They understand and apply sophisticated negotiation methods; build, maintain, and impact large internal and external virtual networks to build collaborative power and to achieve results; and mobilize resources and energies of the organization quickly and logically in crisis situations.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Uses oral and written communication and non-verbal skills to influence behaviors or perceptions constructively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates a clear and compelling vision that provides employees with a sense of direction and which can solicit broad support from key stakeholders. • Maintains the effectiveness of the message and enthusiasm over time. • Maintains the call to service throughout the agency. • Uses media advocacy effectively to change the way an issue is viewed, to create a consistent stream of relevant knowledge, and to motivate others to support the issue.
<p>Builds strong relationships based on confidence and trust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspires public appreciation for the work of government both through personal example, as well as Agency policies, procedures, products and services. • Inspires customers and subordinates to act at the highest level of honesty and integrity and holds them accountable for it. • Develops broad support for ideas and initiatives. • Conducts forums and listening sessions (both internal and external) to maintain an accurate and current read on citizen and customer issues and needs. • Builds, maintains and impacts internal and external virtual networks to build collaborative power and to achieve results. • Communicates with employees and customers by first listening to their needs, issues and ideas and then relating those needs, issues, and ideas to a proposed solution.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Manages, adapts and modifies a wide range of environments and contexts so as to positively influence the achievement of desired behaviors, attitudes or perceptions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps into the fray proactively, decisively, and willingly. • Deals with pressure, ambiguity and stress to ensure that the organization remains productive. • Reaffirms key values and the importance of the mission in times of change to be a visible anchor for others. • Thinks and acts quickly and logically in crisis situations, mobilizing the resources and the energies of the organization effectively. • Builds an overall organizational environment that supports employees. • Defines a vision for change. • Assesses the quality of the workplace environment and culture. • Provides structure and information that helps employees and organizational units understand how to react positively to new demands and circumstances and how to employ existing resources to fulfill new mandates. • Implements knowledge management systems which keep employees involved, committed and in the loop regarding long-term agency goals. • Debriefs stressful situations as needed.
<p>Understands theory and practice of negotiation; especially to find common ground and implement win-win solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a strategic understanding of the issues and of how barriers to solutions might be addressed. • Understands agenda setting and uses a variety of strategies, including the media to shape the debate. • Understands the wider economic, social and political costs and benefits of a specific action. • Listens to all positions on an issue and provides opposing viewpoints when and where appropriate. • Knows and understands the context for policy development and can be an effective and active participant. • Understands when demands exceed the capacity of the organization to respond, and, when it is necessary, has the fortitude to say “no” to unreasonable demands. • Effectively communicates with Congressional representatives and staffers to secure funding and build support for the Agency’s work.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Consider an assignment as Field Supervisor at a station with a heavy 404 workload.
- Consider gaining Congressional Budget Office experience.
- Consider a Departmental Budget Office detail.
- Work on joint labor-management groups to influence outcomes and effectively contribute to collective bargaining agreement process.
- Volunteer to lead a public meeting/hearing.
- Detail to WO Budget office during budget formulation and passback.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Consider an assignment in an EEO Office.
- Expand your knowledge base by reading books about influencing and negotiation.
- Follow the progress of a state or Federal legislative proposal.
- Reflect on whether additional self development in interpersonal skills is warranted.
- Read the book “Getting to Yes, Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In” by Roger Fisher and William Ury and “Getting Past No, Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation” by William Ury.

Training

- Consider the Institute for Participatory Management and Planning course (Bleiker).
- Consider attending team/group dynamics training at NCTC or from a private vendor.
- Consider attending the following NCTC courses; Interest-Based Negotiations OUT8121, Applying Collaboration to Environmental Issues, and [Effective Facilitation](#) LED5122.
- Take additional ethics training.

POLITICAL SAVVY (ECQ - BUILDING COALITIONS AND COMMUNICATION)

Definition

Identifies the internal and external politics that impact the work of the organization, approaches each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality, and recognizes the impact of alternative courses of action.

Importance

Political savvy is essential in every organization and is a critical competency in a governmental organization that is buffeted by multiple stakeholders, has limited resources, and operates in the constantly changing dynamics of a democratic political system. Those who are politically savvy have knowledge of the internal and external systems and the ways in which those systems function in both their organization and in the larger political environment. They have a clear sense of mission and maintain a current understanding of the political, social, technological, economic and demographic environment in which they operate. Political savvy and emotional intelligence aid the public servant in building consensus and gaining the cooperation of others, which are essential to partnering, strategic thinking, vision, conflict management, and influencing others. Political savvy is vital at the upper levels of an Agency. It must be learned and skills honed so that departmental and/or organizational policies may reflect public interests, emerging concerns may be integrated into new program policies, and the Agency may be effective and advance its mission.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

Executive Leaders have a strategic understanding of the Agency, and its mission. They maintain a constant awareness of the external environment gathering information on public, political, and internal issues, building support and promoting the agency image using this knowledge of external trends, underlying issues, and political reality to guide and shape the strategy of the organization to achieve maximum impact and effectiveness. The Executive leader is politically adroit in addressing, informing and negotiating buy-in from all key stakeholders, addressing their needs without compromising organizational integrity. They continuously broaden networks of relationships and use media advocacy effectively to shape the way an issue is viewed. Executive leaders assemble coalitions and build broad-based support for initiatives and directives

while advancing federal policy initiatives by integrating them into new program policies that are consistent with the strategic direction of the agency.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Understands the Federal government, the Service, and the systems within the Bureau, including the major functions, departments, and processes within the Service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates the full context of the strategic direction of the Service and the policy development initiatives, structures, mission goals, partnering relationships, and legislative dynamics in the face of evolving environmental realities. • Establishes connections with diverse organizational interests to effectively communicate priorities and strategic direction, build organizational credibility, and generate external support for conservation goals. • Integrates a global perspective in decision making that considers national and international events impacting the agency's capacity to accomplish its conservation mission. • Anticipates resistance to agency positions on issues and takes proactive steps to address opposing arguments through constructive dialog.
<p>Understands the Agency's mission; knows the issues at the heart of the Agency's policy agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies potential barriers to the accomplishment of the Agency's strategic direction and implements proactive steps to mitigate obstacles. • Creates mechanisms that provide stakeholders with constructive means to express concerns and addresses issues in a manner that preserves the integrity of the organization. • Synthesizes differing perspectives and incorporates feedback to improve Agency responsiveness to constituent issues and mission accomplishment. • Creates a culture that values and pursues customer focused input and feedback about agency policy.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Understands the climate and culture of the organization, its formal and informal power structures; recognizes decision influencers; recognizes legitimate limits to the organization's reach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences the Service's strategy to achieve its conservation goals by taking all internal and external factors into account that affect the ability to accomplish the Service mission. • Demonstrates a keen understanding of the complimentary and competing impacts that Federal agencies, state agencies, tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations have on the ability of the Service to accomplish its conservation goals. • Develops and implements collaborative strategies that leverage the interdependent interests of diverse partners in accomplishing Service conservation goals. • Adapts strategies to preserve important partnering relationships based on changes in organizational capability and capacity.
<p>Identifies, builds, influences and strengthens internal support bases.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informs and negotiates buy-in from all key stakeholders. • Works effectively with elected officials at the Federal, state, and local level and uses knowledge gained from interactions to remove obstacles to mission accomplishment. • Proactively uses diverse media venues to effectively communicate the mission of the agency or address agency criticisms. • Tailors messages that effectively communicate specific aspects of agency policy to targeted audiences. • Uses the media effectively to obtain input and debate about policy issues. • Inspires public appreciation and trust in the agency's mission activities through personal example and agency policies, procedures, products and services.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Volunteer for a detail in External Affairs or similar position in a non-governmental organization (NGO).
- Volunteer for a detail in International Affairs within the Service or with another federal agency.
- Work on a high-interest project that requires Congressional support.
- Reflect on whether you are sensitive to others, can read non-verbal signals of others, and know how to get things done inside and outside the organization.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Take a 360-degree assessment tool as a way to receive feedback from others.
- Reflect on whether others trust you and if you are seen as having high integrity.
- Continue to master interpersonal skills and build relationships inside and outside the organization.
- Ensure you know “who’s who” and their roles and responsibilities in the Service and with other outside partners.
- Reflect on whether you are savvy with only select groups. Separate people from the problem.
- Maintain flexibility and resilience, and expect the unexpected.
- Seek out a coach or mentor within the organization. Inquire about shadowing opportunities.
- Attend Congressional subcommittee hearings, and learn as much as you can about the political process through reading and asking questions.
- Practice not “thinking out loud” when others are around.
- Join a local [Toastmasters](#) club to sharpen your presentation skills.

Training

- Attend the [Leadership Challenge Workshop](#) at NCTC or from other outside public vendors.
- Attend training that focuses on influencing and negotiating.
- Attend training at [Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) related to this subject.
- Apply for the [Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Candidate Development Program](#) if not already enrolled.
 - Consider the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) for relevant training.
 - Consider the [Kennedy School of Government](#) for relevant training on this subject.
 - Consider [The Brookings Institution](#) for relevant training on this subject.
 - Take executive or graduate level training courses for relevant training on this subject.

STRATEGIC THINKING (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Formulates effective strategies consistent with the mission, vision, and priorities of the Service in a global environment. Examines policy issues and strategic planning with a long-term perspective. Determines objectives and sets priorities while anticipating potential threats or opportunities.

Importance

Strategic Thinking is the conceptual process that underlies two of the elements most critical for success in any organization—strategic planning and strategic management. It is the apex of managerial and executive thinking and is simultaneously considered both the most difficult and most important challenge for any public or private organization and its leaders. It is imperative that the senior leadership of the Service continually scan the environment and engage in strategic thinking to develop a compelling strategy for the organization, and motivate all within the organization to think strategically, aligning plans and policies to support and promote the Service and organizational mission, vision and priorities.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

Executives must be constantly aware of the external and internal environment and the strengths and weaknesses of the Agency to anticipate and recognize change and its potential impact on long term plans. They reframe the mission and vision of the organization to meet changing priorities in the global economy and understand the interdependencies of longer-term political, economic, global, and social trends. The executive leader uses knowledge of emerging public issues/concerns to develop new program policies that address long-term needs, have a significant impact on public well-being and are consistent with the mission of the agency. They adjust organizational direction to align with shifting national priorities by creating long-range plans to enhance organizational performance and survival and involve both internal and external stakeholders in the planning process. The executive leader establishes partnerships to maximize resource availability and organizational performance, creates a mission- and performance-oriented culture that recognizes and rewards strategic performance and goal accomplishment, links budget to performance, and educates managers in understanding, aligning, and communicating Agency plans.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Understands the organization, its mission, its customers, and its evolving environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Influences the Service’s strategy to achieve its conservation goals by taking all internal and external factors into account that affect the ability to accomplish the Service mission. • Demonstrates a keen understanding of the complimentary and competing impacts that Federal agencies, state agencies, tribal governments, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations have on the ability of the Service to accomplish its conservation goals. • Develops and implements collaborative strategies that leverage the interdependent interests of diverse partners in accomplishing Service conservation goals. • Adapts strategies to preserve important partnering relationships based on changes in organizational capability and capacity.
<p>Plans and works towards long term success, affordability and sustainability employing systems thinking and other analytical forecasting tools to assess risks and prioritize among options, programs, and initiatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discerns implications of the changing environment on the Service’s ability to accomplish its conservation goals and proactively adapts strategies to adjust priorities and address change pressures. • Conceives and implements strategies that integrate Service program areas and leverages internal resources to identify and achieve shared priorities and objectives. • Uses a metrics based approach to assess strategy effectiveness and identify proactive measures to adapt program initiatives to overcome obstacles. • Implements a human capital management strategy that identifies gaps, develops new competencies in the workforce meeting future Service needs, and establishes a culture supporting innovation, creativity, and risk taking.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
Plans strategic direction for the organization that is consistent with its fundamental purpose/mission and that is based on a holistic view of interdependent internal and external variable factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans a strategic direction for the organization based on a holistic view of Service priorities and limited resources. • Develops Service strategies to support the administration's policy direction and works with the legislative branch to accomplish the administration's goals.
Establishes and values the importance of objectives and performance measures consistent with Service goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and implements budget and performance integration strategies. • Works with partners to achieve success measures through collaborative initiatives. • Identifies opportunities for organizational re-engineering, builds support for organizational change, and restructures assets to align with identified priorities and to improve organizational effectiveness.
Communicates strategies and obtains support for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulates the strategic direction of the organization in a manner that motivates the workforce to accomplish the strategy. • Works with internal and external stakeholders to gain support for identified changes and leverage their support with other affected or interested parties.

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Consider an assignment as the leader/manager in charge with responsibility for integrating people, budget and strategic direction and execution.
- Gain substantive experience in national scope projects or initiatives involving multiple stakeholders.
- Consider a detail in the WO Budget Office during budget planning times.
- Volunteer to be an officer in a community group.
- Volunteer to lead a programmatic strategic plan.
- Consider a detail in a WO program planning office.
- Consider a detail in Congressional Legislative Affairs.
- Consider a detail in DOI or another federal bureau.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Gain experience in Service program policy and planning functional units.
- Consider experience with State, tribal and non-governmental conservation oriented organizations.
- Do not discount experience with private industry organizations and trade associations involved in natural resource use such as:
 - Cattlemen' Association
 - Forest products industry
 - National Association of Home Builders
 - Energy cooperatives
- Consider assignments with Departmental and/or other Federal departments that are prominently involved in Service issues including but not limited to:
 - Office of Management & Budget
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - National Park Service
 - U.S. Forest Service
 - Bureau of Reclamation
 - Army Corps of Engineers

- US Geological Survey
 - Department of Agriculture
 - NOAA Fisheries
 - Environmental Protection Agency
- Read books to expand your knowledge base.
 - Reflect on whether you have a broad enough perspective to pull together varying elements into a coherent strategic view.
 - Are you curious? If not, why not?
 - Read numerous strategic case studies in business publications and journals.
 - Reflect on whether you are delegating enough day-to-day activities to others so that you could have more quality time to think strategically.
 - Reflect on how your short term strategic plan affects the long term plan.

Training

- Consider senior grade training opportunities such as:
 - The Service's [Advanced Leadership Development Program](#) (ALDP) as a coach (GS-15 level only).
 - [Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program](#)
 - [Federal Executive Institute](#)'s "Leadership in a Democratic Society"
 - [Center for Creative Leadership](#)'s "Developing the Strategic Leader"
 - [Kennedy School of Government](#) training
 - [The Brookings Institution](#) training
- Executive or graduate level training courses in:
 - Strategic Management
 - Systems Thinking
 - Strategic Issue Analysis and Formulation
 - Managing Complex Systems Change
 - Advanced Program Management
 - Structured decision making
 - Critical thinking/writing
 - Chaos theory and mind mapping

VISION (ECQ - LEADING CHANGE)

Definition

Takes a long-term view and acts as a catalyst for organizational change, creating a shared vision with others and influences others to translate that vision into action.

Importance

The identification and articulation of a vision assists an organization in achieving a sense of purpose. It acts as a catalyst for organizational change and is a prime element in the development of strategic analysis, planning, and management. Strategic Vision and the accompanying analysis, planning, and management provide structure for decision making throughout the organization and are correlated with successful achievement of an organization's goals and priorities. Leaders must be able to communicate their agency's mission, core values and strategic goals to employees and create and sustain a positive workplace that inspires them to support the agency mission and goals.

How do Executive Leaders (GS-15 and SES) Demonstrate This Competency?

Executive leaders must understand the full scope of Service and governmental issues. They develop and promote a shared vision for the organization and partner with all levels of the organization to co-create the vision thereby creating "ownership" of the vision and ultimately drive organizational behavior towards a desired future. Executive leaders must challenge the status quo, ensure repeated actions are taken to overcome obstacles and resistance to change, and embody the desired change through strong, symbolic actions that are consistent with the stated vision of the Agency. They must establish key strategic planning processes to identify needs and opportunities that enable the Agency to remain responsive to changing needs. Executives must establish clear responsibilities and objectives to deliver results, develop and implement guiding coalitions that champion the vision for the organization, and communicate the vision throughout the organization often, widely, and with effective use of a variety of media.

Elements of the Competency and Distinguishing Behaviors

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Has a breadth of perspective and a clear understanding of the Agency, its role in the Federal Government, and the full and changing context in which the organization's mission is set.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the full scope of Service and governmental issues so that vision and direction is conceived more in terms of coordinating vs. providing service. • Knows and understands the context for policy development and can be an effective and active participant. • Participates in knowledge and policy networks and ensures Agency participation in such networks. • Has a global breadth of perspective and is able to work and coordinate work cross-culturally, nationally, internationally and globally. • Creates a vision of addressing problems effectively across agencies, with NGOs, and international organizations in a sustained and articulated rather than stove piped fashion. • Promotes an active and dynamic customer focus throughout the organization that is participative, interactive, and proactive. • Is politically adroit in addressing, informing and negotiating buy-in from all key stakeholders. • Solicits, understands, and anticipates the changing needs and expectations of stakeholders and remains alert to opportunities to serve constituents better. • Understands and uses benchmarking and other investigatory processes to identify world-class standards.
<p>Values and uses systematic scanning and other analytical tools so as to identify and integrate key issues affecting the organization and its service mission into a believable vision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looks at the agency holistically and responds to change strategically. • Conceives and articulates goals which unite people in the pursuit of objectives worthy of their best efforts. • Develops and influences the culture, values and structures in delivering and developing improved services and organizational capacity. • Addresses obstacles to change even though it may mean facing hard truths and making tough decisions. • Scans the organization's political, social, economic, environmental, and technological environment for new information and to pick up shifts in relationships, priorities, needs.

Element	Distinguishing Behaviors
<p>Anticipates changes and conceives new models for responding to complexity, uncertainty and new realities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes key strategic planning processes that enable the Agency to remain responsive to changing needs. • Looks at the agency holistically and responds to change strategically. • Leads change. • Conceives improvements in terms of qualitative leaps, rather than incremental steps. • Challenges the status quo publicly by competing it against an ideal or a vision of change and takes dramatic and sustained actions to enforce the change effort. • Is an agile, flexible, and innovative thinker.
<p>Communicates the organization's mission, values and vision clearly, building a shared vision and "orchestrating" individual efforts into a meaningful whole.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a clear and explicit view that signals where the organization is headed and why. • Creates broad ownership of the vision throughout the organization, engendering energy and voluntary engagement which is key to the vision's sustainability. • Develops core teams or guiding coalitions that champion the vision for the organization.
<p>Demonstrates personal commitment to the organization's mission, values, and vision, and embodies the honesty, integrity, ethics, courage, and personal accountability that engender trust and inspire belief, commitment, and action from others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplifies or embodies the desired change through strong, symbolic actions that are consistent with the change. • Steers the agency towards its higher service purpose through the development, articulation and implementation of organizational vision. • Understands the need to serve broader interests, not just independent departmental or agency interests. • Is a visible anchor for others, reaffirming key values and importance of the mission in times of change. • Is a personal source of energy and direction. • Sets direction through vision in a way that broadly inspires trust and confidence..

Developmental Activities

There are numerous activities an employee may engage in that provide the opportunity to develop this competency at the Executive (GS-15 and SES) level. These activities may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, details, shadow assignments, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. These activities provide the *opportunity* to develop for those dedicated to their individual growth as a leader. Specific examples of developmental opportunities for this competency include:

Primary Developmental Activities

- Develop a program vision, then share and “sell” the vision to others.
- Rally supporters for your vision, and create mileposts and symbols that support the vision.
- Volunteer for a detail at the Deputy or Directorate level.
- Maintain a positive attitude and be optimistic about the future.
- Read a book about managing change, and follow the process.

Supporting Developmental Activities

Experiential Developmental Details or Assignments

- Join your local [Toastmasters](#) club to sharpen your presentation skills.
- Ensure that the behaviors you exhibit show you truly believe in the vision, and “walk your talk”.
- Ask others for feedback using a 360-degree assessment tool or obtain feedback informally from individuals you trust.
- Continue to develop your interpersonal skills and build relationships with others.
- Ensure you understand and are focused on the correct target audience for your message. Adjust accordingly.
- View Martin Luther King Jr’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and reflect on why it was so successful.
- Shadow successful leaders in the Service or in other organizations.

Training

- Attend the [Leadership Challenge Workshop](#) at NCTC or from other outside public vendors.
- Attend training that focuses on change management and developing motivational skills.
- Attend training at [Federal Executive Institute and Management Development Centers](#) related to this subject.
- Apply for the [Senior Executive Service \(SES\) Candidate Development Program](#) if not already enrolled.

- Attend the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) “Navigating Complex Challenges” course.
- Consider the [Kennedy School of Government](#) for relevant training on this subject.
- Consider [The Brookings Institution](#) for relevant training on this subject.
- Consider executive or graduate level training courses for relevant training on this subject.

Linkage of Competencies Among Levels

Service focus groups identified seven mission critical leadership competencies for four different organizational leadership levels. The data shows that there is some overlap of mission critical competencies between organizational leadership levels. Some competencies are extremely important to a leader at a specific organizational level. The relationship between the seven mission critical competencies and their organizational level is shown below.

Linkages Between 7 Mission Critical Competencies for Service Leaders

1st Appointment Leader	Mid-Level Leader	Senior Leader	Executive Leader
	Accountability		
	Creativity/Innovation		
	Problem Solving		
	Technical Credibility		
	Team Building		
	Partnering		
		Influencing / Negotiating	
		Strategic Thinking	
		Developing Others	
		Decisiveness	
			Vision
			Political Savvy
	Conflict Management		
Flexibility			
Customer Service			

For Service leaders at all levels, accountability is the sole leadership competency consistently determined to be mission critical. The ability to be flexible and customer service oriented was deemed essential for first appointment leaders. Creativity/Innovation, Problem Solving, Technical Credibility and Team Building are mission critical competencies for first-appointment and mid-level leaders.

While conflict management poses challenges at all levels, Service focus groups highlighted the ability to deal well with conflict as mission critical for the mid-level leader. Developing strong partnering skills helps bridge a mid-level leader to the next higher organizational level. In addition to partnering skills, senior Service leaders need an astute level of external awareness. Possessing strong influencing/negotiating skills, having the ability to think strategically, being decisive, and the ability to develop others are mission critical for Service senior leaders. It is these same competencies that bridge the senior leader to an

executive level in the Service. Being political savvy and visionary were identified as essential competencies for Service executives.

This tool provides you with specific information for each competency at each organizational leadership level. For example, even though the “*accountability*” competency consistently appears in all four organizational leadership levels, the depth and detail of information provided is different at each level due to the complexity and requirements of a first appointment leader versus an executive leader.

Be aware that this Model does not indicate that to be successful you **MUST** demonstrate every behavior for every competency. The information provided is not meant to be a required checklist for successful leadership. Such a list does not exist, nor would one be all inclusive if it existed. The information provided by the USFWS is a tool to use in your leadership development journey.

The Leadership Challenge Is Yours

The 21st century brings conservation professionals many challenges. Service leaders must be visionary and possess a strong commitment to public service while maintaining a strong conservation ethic. They must be able to apply interpersonal skills to lead and motivate their employees to accomplish great things for our government. It is essential that Service employees continue to step up to the highest levels of leadership in support of the mission and vision of the Service.

Being flexible, rather than rigid, allows leaders to adapt to changing organizational needs and conditions. Service leaders are encouraged to reflect upon whether they currently possess the skills and abilities our organization needs from them. Service leaders also need to consider whether they currently possess the skills and abilities their employees need from them as their leader. If they do not, then the individual should set priorities and develop an action plan to improve their competencies in any weak areas.

Service employees are expected to continue to build on their own competencies throughout their career. Leaders, at all organizational levels, must be proficient in all of the six foundational leadership competencies in order to be successful. Service leaders are encouraged to be curious about the conservation work the agency conducts, to ask questions, to listen, and take the advice of others who can guide them in their own leadership development.

This Model is designed to stimulate the leader to think and reflect about his/her own leadership development at a personal level. It is also designed to stimulate organizational thought related to Service succession planning needs.

We hope you find this information useful. Comments related to this material can be provided to: [Branch Chief, Conservation Leadership and Employee Development](#) , National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV.